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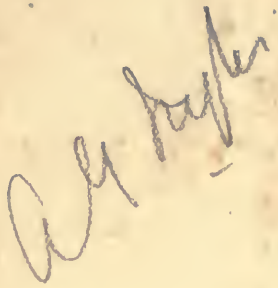

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SECRET MEMOIRS OF THE COURT OF FRANCE

DURING THE

XVIIth AND XVIIIth CENTURIES

MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC D'ORLEANS REGENT DU ROYAUME DE FRANCE
Crépy Sc.

MEMOIRS
OF
CARDINAL DUBOIS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY ERNEST DOWSON

WITH PHOTOGRAVURE PORTRAITS
OF CARDINAL DUBOIS AND
THE DUC D'ORLÉANS

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME TWO

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In spite of Maréchal's sinister prophecy, nothing had yet transpired as to the King's desperate condition. However, his gloom seemed like a presentiment of his approaching end, and it was visible from Fagon's air that medicine, having nothing further to do with Louis XIV, could already dispense with flattering him with vain hopes. This old rascal, who thought it an honour to be the chief lackey of Madame de Maintenon, seemed paid to kill Louis XIV. It was a sight to see him leaning on his cane, presiding, with his mocking smile, over the sudorific frictions given to the august patient. Baths and blooding completed the work. An old man was bound to succumb to treatment which even a young man might not have borne with impunity. Père Le Tellier was equally unmerciful towards the King's sick soul, which had so long been dieted on masses and acts of contrition. The Maintenon seemed grievously affected, not that she greatly regretted Louis XIV; but he was King, and with him what did she not lose?

It was the beginning of the month of August, and the King was no better. He was not blind to his condition, for he had said to Villeroi, who was speaking of his projects for the new year:

"Monsieur, apply to my successor."

"Sire, do not give way to these sombre ideas," replied the Maréchal.

"'Tis not that which grieves me; but I tremble to think of what will happen when I am gone."

The Court was silently expectant of events. There were no more magnificent *fêtes* at Versailles, but aged faces, anxious, frigid, and severe. People accosted one another with inquiries as to the hour of mass, of the sermon, of the procession; there was talk of the Constitution also; no one thought of the danger in which the life of Louis XIV lay. The Duc d'Orléans invited the Earl of Stairs, the English ambassador, to his little suppers in the Palais-Royal. He presented me as his intimate confidant to this ambassador, who, from that time forward, remained my friend, in spite of our different nationalities. The Earl of Stairs, Commander of the Scotch troops, had been sent as ambassador to France by King George I. He was a statesman and a wit, and possessed a further quality, which is never out of place—he succeeded in all his undertakings. He well deserved his reputation in the army, and the famous Dutch engineer, Cohorn, was his first master. His gentle physiognomy has little character. I believe him to have the Scotch frankness, which consists in never dissimulating unnecessarily. He cuts a fine figure at a prince's table; his ease of manner is graceful, his conversation varied, and his tact exquisite. The English especially esteem his eloquence—I should say rather his fluent speech. He is a most accomplished diplomatist; and a better companion at table I have not found. Stanhope had already spoken of me to him, and he found me superior to the good and ill he had heard of me. We conversed at length upon England, he speaking French, I English. I sang the praises of his country. The women withdrew at dessert, and, delaying for a moment to follow them, we resumed the conversation more confidentially. The Duc d'Orléans' intentions in the matter of the King's will were revealed to him, as well as my mission to London. He entered warmly into all our plans.

"Milord," I said to him lightly, "Lord Stanhope has praised to me your skill in reading the future; would you be kind enough to give us a specimen of it?"

"What! Milord," interrupted the Prince; "you are one of us?"

"I am flattered, Monseigneur," he answered, "to have something in common with you. We have in Scotland seers who always know on the eve what will happen on the morrow. I am not a Scotchman in that respect, but I can say with truth that I am never deceived in the glass-of-water test."

"Would you be able to tell us exactly when the King will die?" I asked.

Without replying, he filled with water the largest glass he could find, embossed with the arms of the House of Orléans, and holding it up to the light, he cried, with a prophetic air:

"His Majesty will not see out the month of September."

"You are right," added His Highness, coldly.

"What, Monseigneur," cried I; "I am to be alone in wagering against Monsieur."

"A wager!" continued Lord Stairs; "with much pleasure, and for any sum you like."

"Two hundred guineas."

"You will infallibly lose," said the Prince, stopping me. "My experiments have led to the same result, and I am sure the King has not a fortnight to live."

"No matter," said I; "the wager holds good; it is strange to gamble on the life of a King of France."

"I will say more," added the Earl of Stairs, again examining his glass; "I affirm that in a month from to-day the King will be no more." We were then at the third of August.

"Since you are prepared to play the sorcerer," said I, with a laugh, "inform me of the date of my death, so that I may take the precaution of obtaining absolution."

"You are wrong, Abbé," said the Prince, shaking his head, "to trouble yourself with this kind of matters; you will be imposing a daily torment on yourself for the rest of your life. Believe me, once informed of what you had far better ignore, you will not die any the sooner or later for it."

The Earl of Stairs asked for cards, which he drew at random, without taking the trouble to combat my incredulity with words. When he had thoroughly questioned his familiar demon, he acquainted me with my destiny in these terms:

"You will die a cardinal and minister."

"If that is the case," retorted the Duc d'Orléans, "he runs a risk of living for ever."

"But how long do you give me to live?" I asked, without showing any surprise at his prediction.

"A year less than His Royal Highness," he said, counting on his fingers.

A glance from the Prince checked my indiscreet questions, and we were satisfied with the wager of two hundred guineas. The manner in which I lost it has often made me apprehensive of the completion of the prophecy concerning me. I am now a cardinal and a minister; it only remains for me to die a year before my pupil; which of us two is the most favoured?

It was known that on the 4th of August the King was to receive, at a public audience, the Persian ambassador, Mehemet Riga Beyd, who had been residing in Paris for some months. I had seen a glimpse of him at the Opera, and was curious to judge for myself whether, as was said, this sham ambassador was a snare set by Pontchartrain for the King's vanity. Doubtless he was afraid of someone being sent to Ispahan for information. But, according to my conviction, and the notes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I will answer that Mehemet was more of a Persian than we are; for the rest, he was a born adventurer, and played the part of ambassador for profit. The whole Court was duped, as was the King, who, I believe, had a medal struck to commemorate the homage rendered him by the King of Persia. Curiosity was stronger in me than the King's commands, and I repaired to Versailles in the Duc d'Orléans' suite. This piece of imprudence might have cost me dear, and I admit His Highness was opposed to it.

On the day of the audience Versailles seemed in all its former splendour; the gardens and apartments were full of the sound of persons coming and going; the young and the old Court displayed an extraordinary magnificence, and the ladies showed coquettish designs upon the heart of the ambassador, who was to embark from Havre the following month, after having spent all he had brought with him, and more than ten thousand louis given him by the King of France. His Majesty was seated on a throne at the end of the great gallery. The lustre of the Crown jewels, with which his robe was covered, accentuated his air of suffering and the pallor of his traits. Mehemet was a tall and handsome man, speaking little, and always smiling, at the King as well as at the lowest menials. His slightly bronzed skin, his

large black eyes, his hair and beard of a lustrous black, his athletic and withal elegant figure, attracted to him the ardent gazes of the haughtiest duchesses. He advanced awkwardly enough towards the dais, followed by his interpreter, and kissed the ground, according to the custom of his nation. The King begged him to rise, saying: "One kneels only before God."

The interpreter replied in the ambassador's name, "That kings were the sons of God, and His Majesty was His most perfect image."

I suspected from these flatteries that the poor ambassador had come to ask for money in order to return to Persia. He did not fail to do this, nor did he meet with a refusal. Père Le Tellier seized the opportunity to display his zeal:

"Mehemet Riga Beyd," he said boldly, "it would please both God and His Majesty if you were to become a Christian."

"No," replied the ambassador, to whom the interpreter submitted this incongruous proposition; "God alone is God, and Mahomet is his prophet."

"He does not understand the Constitution," murmured Madame de Maintenon.

The confessor, leaning over to the King's ear, spoke to him in low and eager tones.

"Mehemet," said Louis XIV, with a severe face, "do you know what they accuse you of?"

"Sublime Sophi," he answered, "if I am guilty, I consent to receive a hundred blows of the bastinado."

"They assure me," replied the King, "that you have made a married woman abjure Christianity in order to take her to Persia."

"Master, shut your heart and your ears to the serpents of slander, and serve me as a buckler against my enemies."

"In the meantime, to silence these rumours which distress me, I forbid you to take away any of my subjects, male or female, whether they consent or no."

"Your desires are the rudder of my conduct."

I should be at a loss were I to try and imitate the florid and symbolical language of the ambassador, whose falsehoods were disguised by brilliant externals. The fact of the apostasy was not, as I had thought at first, a device of Père Le Tellier. I knew intimately this Madame d'Epinay, who went to die in a Persian seraglio. She was a natural daughter of the little Abbé de

Grancey, was as shameless as her mother, and more determined than her father. I had married her more honestly than she deserved, and the ambassador, seduced by her natural plumpness, augmented it still more. She was delivered of a little Persian. Mehemet, in spite of his clumsy airs, had the wit to succeed. He eluded the command of the King, who had forbidden him to depart with any travelling companion, most ingeniously. He had Madame d' Epinay packed in a case pierced with holes, and when they would have searched the case he begged them not to touch it, explaining that it contained the sacred books written by Mahomet himself, which would be profaned by Christian breath. They refrained from wounding his religious scruples, and the pregnant woman was thus able to leave France. I have been told that she became the favourite Sultana of the Sophi, after Mehemet had strangled himself, in his fear lest some one else should do it, on his return to Persia.

The audience being over, Louis XIV happened to pass the place where I stood; he seemed displeased at seeing me.

"Sire," I said, "I have prayed to God for the preservation of your precious health."

"Beware of doing so, M. l' Abbé," he replied, "the prayers of an impious man bring misfortune, and I should dread the effect of yours."

"Sire, I have been calumniated to your Majesty; that is the only reason which has given me the audacity to present myself here without your permission."

"Our Lord Jesus Christ pardoned his executioners on the cross; I pardon you also, Monsieur, and wish you life eternal. M. d' Orléans," he added, turning towards that Prince, "I pity you for having this man in your service."

With these words, harshly pronounced, he dragged himself to his apartments, where he lost consciousness. He was put to bed in a fever, and thenceforth I foresaw I had lost my wager. As for prayers, I left the care of them to others.

I had set foot again in Versailles with the secret intention of maintaining myself there, and during the King's illness I made frequent appearances in order to keep the Prince informed of what was passing. As the fatal moment approached, there were strange divisions amongst the courtiers; some rallied to the Duc du Maine and the will; others attached themselves to the Duc

d' Orléans; some to Père Le Tellier, who did not believe his disgrace was so imminent. The Duchesse du Maine had arrived in residence at the Château of Versailles; the Duc d' Orléans held his Court at the Palais-Royal, for the crowd's preference was directed towards him; the Maintenon, in order to be prepared for any event, removed to Saint-Cyr; I stationed myself in a post of observation at the top of the great staircase, and lent an ear to what was said, for and against; the lackeys were as keen over politics as other greater folk; the liveries were anxious to know who would be King. Alarms were disseminated as to the health of the Dauphin—which was no worse than before,—doubts as to the existence of the will, suspicions as to the cause of the King's illness, and hopes of the most conflicting nature. In short, everyone listened, went about, said his say, wept or laughed, according to his interest and his degree of attachment to the King. In the aspect of Paris, on the contrary, there was no change, and if people did not wish for the death of Louis XIV, they did not dread it. A reign of seventy-two years is a little long for the French people.

One day, being seated in a secluded corner of the gardens, I was meditating as to what I had to gain from this inevitable death, when I saw the Duc du Maine and the old cripple Fagon advancing towards me. I neither breathed nor stirred.

"Will it be long?" asked the Duc du Maine.

"A month at the most," replied Fagon.

"You do not think he can recover?"

"Only by a miracle, and though you may believe in miracles, I do not; the gangrene has already reached the legs."

"Are you sure it is gangrene?" interrupted the Duc du Maine.

"To save him one would have to give him a wooden leg like Scarron."

"Madame de Maintenon would not agree to that."

They retired, continuing their indecent jests; it was but two ungrateful men the more.

On the 26th, a mortal gangrene, as Fagon had foretold, set up in both legs at once; on that day the finest of the courtiers showed themselves at the Palais-Royal. The King was ignorant that it was gangrene; Maréchal, his favourite surgeon, told him of it, and made him submit to deep and painful incisions.

Maréchal perceived the uselessness of such a martyrdom, and stopped short, his eyes full of tears.

"What is the matter with you?" asked the King; "I do not like people to hide their faces from me and weep. The disease is incurable, I see; what is the good of these sufferings? Let me die in peace. How many days do you think I still have to live?"

"Until Wednesday next, Sire," said Maréchal, who could no longer conceal the truth from the King.

"Ah, well! Then I will hold myself in readiness for Wednesday. From this moment, I am no longer King."

These details, which were immediately repeated, reached me from every side; I conveyed them to the Duc d'Orléans, who asked me, with a distracted air, how I explained this line:

"When travellers come from Ormuz."

"It is all explained, like the rest," I answered.

"*Travellers* seems to me to point to the Persian ambassador, who came, actually, from Ormuz."

"That is as clear as possible."

His Royal Highness was informed that the King had sent for him. This was the second time; the first interview had passed coldly on either side; Louis XIV, being compelled to speak of the will, said airily to the Duc d'Orléans that he was treated in it in accordance with the rights of his birth. They separated with that constraint of speech which proves a mutual embarrassment. This second interview, which I will relate faithfully, as it was described to me by the Prince, was of no slight interest.

The Duc d'Orléans found the King alone, supported by pillows, and arranging papers in a casket. Even Madame de Maintenon was absent.

"Sire," said the Prince, "is your Majesty any better?"

"I am about to appear before God; that is why I have summoned you."

"Sire. . . ."

"Take a seat and listen to me. When I was King I had the misfortune to suspect you of nameless crimes. . . ."

"If you could have doubted my innocence, Sire, why did you not have me tried?"

"Time and tardy information has enlightened me; I know

you are innocent, and I pray you, by the merits of the divine Saviour, to excuse my deplorable error. . . ."

"Sire, I am too happy, since justice has been rendered me."

"The real culprits will be punished in this life or the next. I am grieved that I have made a will which I would not sign now, were it to be done over again; but this testament will meet with the same fate as that of my most honoured father."

"Sire, dare I venture to question you as to its provisions?"

"I tell you that they will not be executed; you need not therefore distress yourself. You alone will be the Regent of France, and I commend the little Dauphin to you, before God and before men."

At a movement of the King, his shirt flew open, and on his chest the Duc d'Orléans perceived a scapular.

"I wear it," said the King, "for the love of them; they have told me that this simple token kept away the tempter and calmed bodily pains: in fact, I feel at peace. The day before yesterday M. le Cardinal de Rohan gave me Communion and extreme unction; that gives courage. Madame de Montespan was quite wrong to be afraid of death; above all, do not talk about this scapular of the Jesuits."

"Sire, the Jesuits have done much harm to your kingdom."

"Père Le Tellier has over-much zeal; I have told him so, indeed, with regard to the Bull; contrive that he is not made the King's confessor."

"Sire, I will obey you in every point."

"Have you any idea of employing one of your servants, the Abbé Dubois, the most perverse of men?"

"I will do as you will with him; however, this Dubois has such ability that he might be made useful."

"First reform his conduct; and then send him abroad on some negotiation where intrigue and skill are needed. I advise you to make any sacrifices in order to maintain the Peace of Utrecht."

"I shall follow, Sire, the instructions you have given me."

"Love the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse as your brothers; have regard for all the Princes; your madcap Madame de Berri would be wise if she went into a convent—not the Carmelites, they are a pest that you would do well to uproot; preserve for Madame de Maintenon the respect which

you bore me when I was King: in losing me, she will lose more than you think."

"Sire, all hope is not extinct; the hand of God can do what men can not; you will live yet."

"I have a malady which nothing can heal—old age. It remains for me to confide to you a secret which is known to God and to three persons only. I will deposit it in your bosom in order that if it should come to the knowledge of any living person, you may silence him for ever."

"Sire, you are speaking of the Iron Mask?"

"Yes, my son; that was the greatest of my sins. I have abused my kingly power in order to punish a man, who was perhaps innocent, with a torture of forty years."

"And this man, Sire . . .?"

"Jealousy and a treacherous flatterer blinded me; I thought the Queen guilty—the Queen, that angel upon earth, who rewarded me for my injustice by her virtues. . . . M. d'Orléans, this must never be repeated."

"Sire, do not tell me. . . ."

"It must be; a secret shared by three persons is a secret no longer, and it sufficiently concerns the honour of your own family that you should make it respected."

"And these three persons, Sire?"

"Madame de Maintenon, Lauzun, and Père Le Tellier. I had him tried, condemned; he was destined to perpetual imprisonment. The Queen succeeded in setting him at liberty; he escaped, but not swiftly enough to elude my vengeance. I wished for his blood; others encouraged me in this desire. The Queen implored me so strongly that I granted her his life. An iron mask, which never left him, concealed this unfortunate victim! Fouquet was thought to be dead . . ."

"Fouquet, Sire!"

"He died finally in the Bastille in 1706; his death did not console me."

Louis XIV burst into a torrent of tears; but all the efforts the Duc d'Orléans made to soothe him were unavailing; Louis XIV answered all with this refusal:

"Monsieur, I should offend God were I to say more on the subject to you. It is sufficient for you to know the real name of the man, in order to silence anyone who should divulge this secret of state."

The Duc d'Orléans would never have confided in me these death-bed confessions, had not accident rendered me master of the same secret. I have no doubt but that His Royal Highness, in these last interviews with the King, was initiated into a host of mysteries as dark as this one of the Iron Mask.

The hope of a sudden fortune attracted certain charlatans to present themselves before the King, who was already in his death agony. The first was an old man with a hermit's figure, sandals, a long beard, and an expression which would have terrified travellers had they met him in the woods. He pretended to have arrived from the Holy Land, expressly to perform a miracle; he refused obstinately to explain his method of cure except in the King's presence. All his power, he said, was derived from a phial containing two drops of blood gathered at the foot of the Saviour's cross. He showed no one his precious relic, which he was to employ after the imposition of hands. He was sent to Fagon, who had as little faith in relics as in miracles.

"Certainly, Father," he said to the anchorite, "you shall have permission to make the experiment you desire; but, beforehand, allow me to assure myself that your phial does not contain poison. . . ."

"Gracious Heaven, what an idea! I swear to you that unless the dying man be in a state of mortal sin . . ."

"I believe you; but, once more, give me your remedy."

The man of God, hoping to profit by his ruse, handed Fagon his bottle, fastened and sealed with the arms of Saint Peter.

"The devil!" said the doctor, "this is remarkably black blood!"

"Do not forget that this divine blood has been in that phial for sixteen centuries."

"The phial is certainly not so old, for it is like a church cruet."

Fagon, with ironical *sang-froid*, broke the bottle amid the cries of the mock hermit.

"Father," said he, as he picked up the pieces, "this is not the blood of God, but of the ink-pot."

It was, indeed, dried ink. Père Le Tellier was the first to be wrath at this innocent piece of trickery, and the fabricator of the Saint Grail spent two years in the prison of Saint-Pierre-en-Seine.

Another quack, styling himself a German doctor of the faculty of Leipzig, who was something of a chemist, and had experi-

mented with the Duc d'Orléans, came with a recommendation from Madame. He was sent from Madame de Maintenon to Père Le Tellier, thence to Fagon, to the Cardinal de Rohan, and to Maréchal. He met with nothing but insults and rebuffs on all sides. One treated him as a quack-doctor, another as a sorcerer, this one as a madman, the next as a knave. Maréchal, although convinced that the King had but a day to live, asked the German what were his hopes.

"I possess two elixirs," replied the latter. "The first will give the King an appetite; it is a week since he has taken any nourishment; the second will delay the progress of the gangrene, and, perhaps, stop it altogether."

"I have no faith in your remedies," said Maréchal, "but there is nothing to risk in attempting all."

The King consented to take the first elixir, the effect of which appeared to him marvellous. His appetite returned, and he ate as heartily as if he had been in good health. They began to believe him out of danger, and the gloom of the Duc du Maine seemed to confirm this news.

"Wait till to-morrow!" said Maréchal, with a gesture of doubt

Meanwhile, the rumour of this momentary improvement received such credit that the poets, following the lead of the Court, composed verses of thanksgiving, and the Court returned in haste to the Château. The Duc d'Orléans, who had been beset with visits and premature congratulations, found himself almost alone on that and the following day; this desertion wounded him, and he promised not to forget it.

"If the King takes but one meal more," I said to him, "you will be abandoned altogether."

Madame de Maintenon, who had already retired to Saint-Cyr, returned in the company of hope; and Massillon said to me, with much ill-humour: "What a magnificent funeral oration I am missing!"

"We lose much more than you," I replied.

On the morrow, when the German appeared with his elixir for the gangrene, they shut the door in his face with a thousand insults and threats. The King, after a very restless night, had sent for his family, and they had assembled in tears round his pillow. The Princes and Princesses were all present with the exception of the Dowager Madame de Conti, Madame la

Princesse, and Madame de Vendôme, who feigned illness in order that they might not be present at the last moments of Louis XIV. Madame de Maintenon was noisily telling a rosary of big beads. The King had given his instructions to the Dauphin and the Duc d'Orléans: he perceived the Duc du Maine keeping aloof, and surreptitiously laughing.

"He to whom the care of the young King is entrusted," said he, in a grave voice, "must render account of his stewardship to God and to man. I beg you to watch over this orphan"; and his eyes grew moist. "My daughter," said he to the Duchesse d'Orléans, "do not abuse your position to vex your sisters; they will need protection after my death."

"Madame," he said, addressing the Duchesse du Maine, "obey your husband, who more than all else needs loyal and good counsel."

At that moment, Madame and the Maintenon were quarrelling with their eyes as though they would bite each other; Louis XIV, resuming his advice to his bastards, said: "Ladies, I recommend you above all to be united."

"Yes, Sire, I will obey you," replied Madame, imagining the admonition was addressed to herself and the Maintenon.

"Madame," said the King, "you think I said that to you; no, no, I know you are reasonable; it is to these Princesses I speak, who are not like you in that respect."

"Ah, Sire!" cried Madame, "spare me!"

"God has pardoned," he continued, "and Père Le Tellier, to whom I have confessed, has twice given me absolution; I am very sure that you, at any rate, will not forget me, Madame, for when I was King, I loved you tenderly, and you have as many virtues as others have vices."

"Madame," interrupted the Maintenon, red with anger, "go away, the King is too much moved by you; go away; this emotion is bad for him."

She led her outside, and said to her insinuatingly: "Do not think, Madame, that it is I who have opposed your interests with the King."

"Madame," she answered, sobbing, "there is no longer question of that." And she departed so suddenly that she tumbled over Fagon, who was coming out of the apartment.

"Ah, ah! Madame," said the malicious creature, "don't bring me to the ground."

"What is going on inside?" she asked.

"Death," said he; and he left her.

On the 1st of September, the gangrene having reached the heart, the King's death-struggle commenced amidst horrible sufferings.

"It seems to me," said he, "that a great revolution is operating within me."

"Sire," replied Fagon, "perhaps the crisis will be fortunate."

"No; my muscles are contracting and tightening. Is it Wednesday to-day, M. Maréchal?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Father," said Louis XIV, "a *De Profundis*, if you please."

The confessor fell on his knees before the bed, and the rest of the company imitated him; the King, with clasped hands, followed the prayers with his lips and spirit. Suddenly a sound of violent laughter was heard, which so dismayed those present that they ceased their prayers.

"Continue, I beg you," said the King, repressing a movement of anger, and letting two tears roll down his cheeks.

When the *De Profundis* was said, he sent M. de Villeroi to find out who had been laughing so heartily.

The latter returned in consternation.

"Well," said His Majesty, "have you asked M. du Maine to wait until I am dead before he indulges in the full extent of his joy?"

Madame de Maintenon, entering, interrupted this mild reproof; she noticed the dulled eyes of the dying man, and, for the first time, felt an unfeigned regret.

"Madame," said the King, "I thought dying had been harder."

The peals of laughter were resumed; the Maintenon turned pale; someone rose to impose silence on this untimely mirth, when Louis XIV, making an effort, feebly bade them pay no attention to it. "It is M. du Maine," he said, "although M. de Villeroi does not dare admit it; but, as I am about to die, I forgive him; if I were not dying, I should forgive him equally."

The sorrows of the servants found vent in sobs and moans; the priests were unceasing in their psalm-singing.

"Why do you weep for me?" said the King. "Did you think I was immortal?"

These were his last words. Madame de Maintenon was led away from the lugubrious scene, thanks to her old friend, Fagon. A convulsion of agony terminated the death-struggle; Maréchal laid his hand on the King's breast; the prayers ceased for a moment, and the cry of *The King is dead!* echoed through Versailles.

I was walking at that time in the gallery seeking news and observing faces. I had been a witness of the scandalous hilarity of the Duc du Maine, who was whispering to d'Antin. Massillon, who was as impatient as myself, did not leave the precincts of the royal chamber; he was seeking inspiration for his funeral oration.

"The King," he said to me, "sees his approaching end with firmness and admirable calm."

"Death is nothing," I replied, "to him who dies in public; it is still almost a royal act."

The sudden rumour of the King's death sent us into the room where he had just expired; it was full of prayerful priests, mourning servants; Fagon and Maréchal were examining the corpse, the features of which were irrecognisable, and which seemed to me shrunken.

"You see," said Fagon, "the elixir given to His Majesty was a poison."

"Would it not be better to attribute it to the disease?" replied Maréchal.

"In no other way," said Fagon, "can you explain these terrible ravages; the body has shrunk by the height of a head."

There was a moment's silence, which Massillon took advantage of to advance majestically towards all that was left of Louis the Great. The gaze of all was directed upon him; he raised his arms to Heaven, fixed his eyes upon the deceased in profound meditation, and said in a sonorous voice: "God alone is great, my brethren!" It were impossible to describe the terror which these sublime words produced; I felt a shudder run through my marrow; many of those present fell upon their faces. Thus did Massillon commence his funeral oration over Louis XIV; but that inanimate and disfigured body was as little like a catafalque gleaming with gold and light, as those words, *God alone is great!* were greater than eloquence.

CHAPTER XXVII

ASPECT OF THE COURT AFTER THE DEATH OF LOUIS XIV—THE DUC DU MAINE AND THE DUC D'ORLÉANS—THE POETS AND THE ANTE-CHAMBER—THE REGENT'S SPEECH—THE PARLIAMENT — THE READING OF THE WILL — CONCERNING THE MADMAN, MARANZAC—THE SITTING RESUMED—THE DUC DU MAINE'S RECEPTION AT SCEAUX — THE YOUNG PRINCE DE CONTI—THE KING'S FUNERAL—FIRST CONSEQUENCES OF THE REGENCY

THE death of Louis XIV shed a spirit of restlessness and indecision over the courtiers, which lasted all the day. There was naught save condolences and congratulations. The Maintenon was beset with weeping ladies until she left for Saint-Cyr, praying for her dear Duc du Maine. Père Le Tellier was in close council with his first chaplain, the reverend Père Doucin; the royal family was in affliction, or feigned to be so out of decency; the young King was abandoned to Madame de Ventadour, who let no one approach him; the Duc d'Orléans and the Duc du Maine were gathering together all their partisans; the gentlemen of the robe and the gentlemen of the sword, the lesser and the greater nobles—all were in a bustle about Versailles. In Paris, on the contrary, wherever indifference was not manifested, joy was openly displayed. Had Louis XIV but died twenty years earlier they would have said of him, as the hunchback Fagon said of the Maintenon: "What displeases me in Christianity is that I cannot raise a temple and an altar for her adoration."

It was a sight to see the courtiers oscillating between the Duc du Maine and the Duc d'Orléans. Every one accosted one another with the question: "Who will be Regent?"

The most absurd and contradictory rumours were circulated. All who were thought likely to play a part in the Regency were caressed and fêted. M. de Villeroi went into hiding in order to escape importunities. I myself met with nothing but pleasant faces, respectful salutations and hand-grips; on that day

I had more than three hundred friends. There is no stranger harlequinade than an interregnum. The Duc d'Orléans soon had some of the most determined partisans of the Duc du Maine on his side, for it was stated openly that the Parliament would not admit the King's will, and that M. de Guiches had received a hundred thousand francs in order to win over the troops to the Duc d'Orléans. In the evening these rumours had acquired a consistency which seriously alarmed the partisans of the Duc du Maine, who was forced to notice their defection.

M. du Maine, uneasy, and already cringing, went to meet the Duc d'Orléans with increased politeness.

"Tell me, cousin," said he, "what is the last thing they are saying?"

"It matters very little what is said; I pay no attention to it."

"Doubtless; but it seems they have got scent of the late King's will."

"I neither know, nor wish to know; it will be time to-morrow."

"Certainly; but as it is not unlikely that His Majesty has remembered I was his son . . . "

"I have no knowledge, I tell you, of what has been done or will be done."

He left him abruptly to swallow his mortification.

Madame du Maine, to whom the incident was related, was no less irritated than her husband. She said to him herself:

"Monsieur, I do not know an idiot in the world capable of such a piece of folly. Your part was to compel the Duc d'Orléans to speak frankly, even if you had to set him the example. I am not used to all these petty concealments; you would have made a beautiful woman, if only you had a little beauty."

The Duc d'Orléans had returned to Paris. The evening, the night, was spent in preparations and conferences, at which the Earl of Stairs, as the representative of his government, assisted. As for me, I was the fly on the cart-wheel, but, withal, of greater use. Already I saw myself a personage. The Prince, however, paid no heed to my zealous endeavours. The morrow was expected with general impatience. The Parliament was to assemble to witness the opening of the will. In the morning printed placards were found on the doors of the churches; these

were attributed to me, but I was totally ignorant of them. It was a circular thus conceived:

"*Ladies and Gentlemen,— Your presence is requested at the funeral and burial of the Dame Constitution, natural daughter of Pope Clement XI, which will take place in the Jesuit Church, Rue Saint-Antoine. The Archbishop of Bordeaux will officiate; the Reverend Fathers Le Tellier and Doucin will be chief mourners, and the Curé of Saint-Mederic will pronounce the funeral oration. R.I.P.*"

It was the Jansenists' innocent revenge. Satire flies on wings in Paris; for Manet came to my room humming the famous refrain, new at that time:

"Il est donc mort ce grand barbon,
Regretté de La Maintenon,
De Le Tellier et de Fagon."

"Who taught you such pretty things, rogue?" I asked.

"M. de Fontenelle's lackey, M. l'Abbé."

"The devil he did! Poets are like crows which attack the dead."

I dressed myself as gallantly as possible, and hastened to the Palais-Royal. As I crossed the ante-chambers, there was an onrush of the poets of the Café Laurent, who very near tore my coat to pieces:

"M. l'Abbé, speak for me."

"Protect me."

"My poem."

"My odes."

"Obtain a continuation of my pension."

I escaped from these frogs of Parnassus, saying:

"Gentlemen, the Regent has mighty need of poets and verses to-day; send in your works and petitions, they shall be examined."

Hence the indignation of the Muses with me, and the flood of songs and epigrams which assailed me. However, I laugh at them. Fontenelle, who stood out conspicuous from this rhyming herd, had a wit as apt for all circumstances as any professional courtier. He accosted me less cavalierly than was his wont:

"M. Dubois," said he, "I congratulate you on your new fortune."

"I accept your congratulations, my dear Monsieur, in my quality of first minister."

"In that case, you will see me at your Excellency's feet."

"I shall not leave you there."

After a formal salute, by way of peroration, I went to the Regent, who seemed to me to have a larger entourage than usual. He had just prepared his speech to the Parliament. This time I made the first advances, and begged him to acquaint me with the result of his labours. He read me this singular utterance, the original of which I have preserved as a monument of the most complete lack of tact. It ran as follows:

"*Gentlemen, Louis XIV is dead; his great-grandson Louis XV succeeds him as the next heir to the Crown; I alone, premier Prince of the Blood, have the absolute right to the Regency: I beg you to sanction it; any opposing testament is annulled by this fact. I have already assumed the rank which is my due, relying on the alliance of England, on the suffrages of the troops and those of the Parliament, which you will not refuse me.*"

He had got thus far with this masterpiece, when I stopped him on the brink of the precipice.

"What are you about, Monseigneur?" I cried. "You are simply giving away the victory to the Duc du Maine."

"Do you expect me to fall on my knees before these people, Abbé?"

"No, Monseigneur, but there are ways of gilding the pill; remember the Du Maines and their partisans will be at this meeting."

"I shall be there too, with the Dukes and Peers, and the regiment of guards; for I am resolved to leave nothing undone in order to maintain my prerogatives."

"Indisputably; but it is better worth while conciliating those who may be useful to you; by an eloquent speech I understand a speech which drives home, is frank, but, above all, adroit."

"I consent to that; be my Demosthenes; tell me all there is to be said and how to say it."

I took up my pen and wrote from inspiration the speech which the Duc d'Orléans recited from memory. He admitted, after having read it, that I was still his master, and made an appointment with me at the sitting of the Parliament.

People were sure of the issue. D'Argenson, who was in the Duc d'Orléans' pay, had put the police at his disposal; officers and soldiers of the watch were patrolling the streets of Paris since

the morning. The Duc de Guiches, paid, as I have said, lined all the approaches to the Palais-Royal with the regiment of guards; Renold, Colonel of the Swiss, had posted his regiment in the vicinity of the meeting-house; Philaire, Colonel of the Artillery, had, during the night, concealed cannon in the neighbouring houses. In the hall, officers in disguise, with arms beneath their cloaks, kept ready for the first signal. The populace was hedged in at some distance from the Palais-Royal. The Dukes and Peers, all the chambers, the household of the Duc d' Orléans and that of the Duc du Maine, assembled at noon, amidst a profound silence, which expressed the general uncertainty of their minds. His Royal Highness rode on horseback as far as the great staircase; he had a smile for everybody, and his gracious manners, his noble and open expression, prepossessed in his favour. The Duc du Maine feigned a satisfaction he was far from feeling. Monsieur le Duc and M. de Toulouse drew near his Royal Highness with a sort of affectation. Bishops, priests, ambassadors were present in the assembly; the English ambassador occupied one of the stalls. His presence surprised, and was the cause of some murmurs round the Duc du Maine.

"What is the matter, M. d' Orléans?" asked the bastard, somewhat disconcerted; "at such an array of swords, one would seem to have returned to the days of the League or the Fronde."

"Monsieur," replied His Royal Highness, "I have commanded some troops to be present to preserve order and the liberty of the Parliament."

"I was about to reproach you with the contrary; but, since it is your wish, I am satisfied."

There was a low murmur amongst the Dukes and Peers, because the Duc du Maine had passed them without saluting. It was asserted even that M. de Saint-Simon had been heard to say: "Nevertheless, none of us are bastards." This sally would be the less surprising to me, in that he was on the side of the Duc d' Orléans and the privileges. M. d' Orléans displayed much emotion as he rose and began in these terms:

"Gentlemen, after the misfortunes which have overwhelmed France, and the loss of a great King which we have just sustained, he whom God has given us is our one hope; 'tis to him, Messieurs, that we now owe our homage and faithful obedience; it is I, the first of his subjects, who must set the example of

inviolate fidelity towards his person, of an attachment even closer than others to the interests of his state.

"These sentiments of mine, known to the late King, doubtless secured me the words full of kindness, which he addressed to me in his last moments, and of which I think it right to give you an account.

"After having received the Viaticum, he summoned me, and said:

"'*My nephew, I have made a will in which I have preserved to you all the rights your birth gives you; I recommend the Dauphin to you. . . .*'"

"That he may die of poison like the other princes!" cried a voice from the top of the hall. These words caused a momentary consternation; the Duc d'Orléans turned pale, and came to a stop. The indignation of the nobility almost flamed out; the first president restrained it with a gesture. Search was made in vain to discover the insolent interrupter. His Royal Highness resumed in a firmer voice:

"'*Serve him as faithfully as you have served me, and labour to preserve his kingdom; if you should lose him, you are the master, and the crown belongs to you.*'"

There was the sound of another energetic exclamation, accompanied by a roar of laughter; again the author of this indecent conduct was undiscovered. His Royal Highness feigned not to heed the interruption.

"To these words the King, my uncle, added others, which are too complimentary for me to repeat. He ended by saying to me:

"'*I have made the provisions which seemed to me the wisest; but as one cannot foresee everything, if there is aught which is unsatisfactory, it is to be changed.*'"

"These were his actual words."

"Monsieur," interrupted the Duc du Maine, "you were doubtless sole witness of this interview."

"Everyone is aware, Monsieur," replied the Duc d'Orléans, "that the late King summoned me several times during his illness, and spoke with me in private. I have religiously repeated what he said to me. Gentlemen, to resume:

"I am persuaded, therefore, that in accordance with the laws of the kingdom, and the precedents which have arisen in similar circumstances, and even the intentions of the late King, the Regency is mine; but I should not be satisfied if, to these many

titles which speak in my favour, you did not add your suffrage and approval, by which I shall feel no less flattered than by the Regency itself. I ask you then, when you have read the testament which the late King has committed to your hands, and the codicil I bring you, not to forget my divers titles, and to deliberate equally upon both—namely, upon the right which my birth gives me and that which may be added to it by the will. I am even convinced that you will think fit to commence by deliberating upon the former."

"Gentlemen," interrupted the Duc du Maine once more, "you will rather consult your duty. The will of the late King has quite another authority than that they seek to give to it. It was dictated to my most honoured father by interests of State. I have no doubt but that you will accept it in its entirety."

"Monsieur, you will speak in your turn," cried His Royal Highness, in an imperious voice; and he resumed the thread of his discourse with an air of marked displeasure:

"But, whatever be the title which gives me the right to hope for the Regency, I venture to assure you, gentlemen, that I shall merit it by my zeal for the King's service and my love for the public welfare, especially if I am aided by your counsels and prudent warnings. I ask you for these in advance, protesting before this august assembly that I have no other designs save to relieve the people, to restore order to the finances, retrench superfluous expenditure, to maintain peace at home and abroad, to establish, in particular, the union and tranquillity of the Church, and, in short, to labour to the utmost of my power to promote the happiness of the State. All that I ask now, gentlemen, is for the King's people to give judgment on the propositions I have just made, and that you deliberate, as soon as the will has been read, upon my titles to the Regency, beginning with the first—namely, that which I derive from my birth and the laws of the kingdom."

M. du Maine, his face red, said, with a stammer: "Gentlemen, to that I will reply with the will, which I beg you to open."

A deputation was sent to fetch the will from its hiding-place. The Duc d' Orléans seemed the calmest of all those present.

"Monseigneur," said I, "this is the decisive moment; have you any orders to give me?"

"Yes," he answered. "Try and effect a diversion which will render the Duc du Maine's protestations null."

Uncertain as to what I should do, I rose from my place and went to rejoin the Duc de Guiches, whom I saw in the low stall by the chimney. I informed him of the Regent's idea, and we considered how to execute it. Whilst a councillor read out the will in a voice so feeble that the most attentive could barely hear it, the bastards, the Maintenon, Père Le Tellier, the household of Saint-Cyr, the Council of Regency, created a tumult which the ushers could not quell, when it was averred that the Duc d' Orléans was sacrificed to the grandeur of the Duc du Maine; Saint-Simon so excited the Dukes and Peers that they broke out in murmurs; the hubbub lasted all through the reading, after which, the noise ceasing, M. du Maine wished to speak:

"Gentlemen," said he, "it was not without reason that the late King nominated a council of Regency of which M. d' Orléans is head; he has not disdained to select himself his most faithful servants. Far from my disputing the Regency with the premier Prince of the Blood . . ."

The Duc de Guiches had pointed out to me Maranzac, Monseigneur's fool, gravely seated in the same stall with the Earl of Stairs; I could have wished to have had him by me, and employ him to create some absurd incident. Maranzac served me beyond my hopes. I saw him rise with a thousand apish gestures, and cry to the scarlet gowns:

"Gentlemen, your embarrassment touches me nearly; if it is an unimpeachable Regent you want, behold me; I will do whatever you like."

The jester could have done nothing better, if I had primed him myself. There was a laugh at the sally, which seemed like a reflection on the Duc du Maine; people looked round to see whence it proceeded, and the laugh became universal. Only M. du Maine bit his lip and was silent. Maranzac was taken off to prison, and claimed a moment after by his patroness, Madame la Duchesse the elder.

Immediately, by a general, spontaneous, and thunderous acclamation, the Duc d' Orléans was declared Regent, and the will annulled. There remained a codicil to be fought, making the Duc du Maine master of the King's civil and military household.

"Monseigneur," I said in a low voice to the Duc d' Orléans, "they will not dare give M. du Maine too many rebuffs all at once; adjourn the sitting, in order to prepare your friends and partisans."

"Gentlemen," said his Royal Highness, following my advice, "let me ask you to adjourn the sitting until after dinner."

The Parliament agreed; the assembly dispersed, but the troops remained at their posts.

The Parliament reassembled in the afternoon; the Regent's partisans were encouraged by their first success, those of the Duc du Maine were cast down. That Prince, pale and furious, listened to the whole debate without taking part in it. He put no obstacle in the way of the Duc d'Orléans' triumph, and left before the end of the sitting. All the advantages secured to him by the dead King were reduced to the superintendence of the young King's education; the sovereign power remained with the Duc d'Orléans, who was charged with the choice of a Council of Conscience and a confessor for his royal ward. He also unfolded his project of creating several special councils, which should aid him to support the weight of the Regency. He was escorted back to the Palais-Royal amidst unanimous applause.

I am told that the Duc du Maine, on his return to Sceaux, met with a quite other reception from his wife. The Duchesse, surrounded by her accustomed Court, was awaiting the result of the sitting of the Parliament with haughty tranquillity; they were intoxicating her with flattery to the extent of calling her *Madame la Régente*. When she saw the Duc du Maine arrive all sighs and silence, she suspected what had happened.

"Well, M. du Maine," she said, severely, "what has taken place?"

"The King's will is ignored, repudiated, annulled. . . ."

"And you endured this, Monsieur?"

"What would you have me do, Madame? I was surrounded by swords, pistols, and even cannon."

"It were better never to return than to return dishonoured."

"What good would it be, pray, to get myself killed by the Orléans faction?"

"You are a coward, Monsieur; if I had been in your place, I would not have given up the Regency so cheaply. Leave my presence, or my indignation may carry me to excesses which will dishonour us both."

She uttered these last words in a voice so changed, and with so resolute a gesture, that the Duc du Maine hobbled away much put out of countenance.

"Madame," said the youthful Arouet, who chanced to be present at this conjugal scene, "are you not absolute Regent in your married relations?"

"Madame," went on Vergier, the writer of tales, "everything would be for the best if the Duc du Maine could bestow a few of his qualities on you, or you a few of yours on him."

"You will see," said the Duchesse, "I shall have to conspire for him."

Meanwhile, since the death of Louis XIV, who was not yet buried, indifference changed to joy; all hopes were directed towards the Regency, which promised wonders, and, as the custom is, the past was decried in favour of the present; the grossest songs defamed the great King's memory; the Maintenon sought oblivion at Saint-Cyr; Père Le Tellier had just been exiled to Amiens; the Duc du Maine remained peaceably amongst the delights of Sceaux; the former Court was almost entirely renovated; it set the example of ingratitude whilst the body of the deceased King was still reigning in Versailles; nor did the people exercise more restraint when the rumour spread that the Regent was retrenching more than sixty millions of unnecessary expenditure. As for myself, never having had reason to be grateful for the bounties of Louis XIV, it was not a loss which grieved me overmuch. The Royal family, with the exception of Madame, were as little afflicted, whilst the Prince de Conti, on the eve of the funeral, scandalised Paris by his regardless behaviour.

Louis Armand, Prince de Conti, is deformed, as are so many of the Princes of the Royal family. He might be Scarron, with his face, which is not so hideous as his figure; his mocking laugh, his apish airs are profoundly disagreeable to me; he cannot keep steady on his legs on account of his hump, which grows more prominent day by day, like his belly; it often happens that he falls with his nose upon his cane; this was so customary at the late King's Court that, at the least noise, the people cried: "It is only the Prince de Conti tumbling down." I believe he has wit apart from his malignity; his prodigious absent-mindedness, however, gives him the air of a lunatic. On the day after the King's death he asked everyone he met: "Will the King receive to-day?" They did not answer him, thinking he jested; at last, someone ventured to tell him that the King was dead

and embalmed. "'Tis true," he replied, "he is going hunting to-morrow." His whims are sometimes dangerous, it being his pleasure to hurt; at bottom he loves his wife, whom he torments in a thousand ways. He always keeps loaded pistols at his bedside, and of nights he awakes the Princesse de Conti, with the words: "Madame, I must kill you!" He threatens her with his arms, to the great terror of the poor lady; in the morning she swears she will sleep apart, but, sword in hand, he forces her to lie with him. The Dowager-Princesse de Conti, however, loves the little monster to the point of being jealous of her daughter-in-law, with whom she wages perpetual war, breathing fire and flames at the least pretext for a quarrel. Ten years ago the Dowager-Princess began building a house, which will not be finished in a century. When she is on good terms with her son, the work is suspended; they are recommenced and the number of workmen doubled, immediately they fall out. "I shall leave," she says, "and go and live far away from you." Someone has said that by an inspection of this building you can tell the terms upon which the Prince de Conti and his mother are living.

The Prince de Conti liked to frequent the vilest company, not out of libertinage, but so that he might have poor creatures to torture. He went by preference to the Morival, the well-known procuress, who found him victims submissive to kicks and pin-pricks, and a thousand other hellish inventions. One poor girl issued from his hands all bleeding and unconscious; the Morival took the part of this wretched creature, and her vengeance was in a scurvy disease which the Prince de Conti caught in her house. When the surgeon, Castel, had told him its nature, he burst out in a fury, and swore by the devil, his patron, he would have justice for this discourtesy. His deformities were enhanced, and his cure was a lengthy one. He dissimulated so well that the Morival was astonished not to have had news of him,—a *lettre-de-cachet* for Fort-l'Evêque. Finally, on the day before the late King's interment, the Prince, having recovered, put his project into execution. The Morival was arrested in bed in the early morning, garroted in her chemise, set upon a scurvy ass, and led to the sound of a trumpet through the streets of Paris. The crowd followed with hoots and shouts of laughter; and a knave of a lackey, who held the ass's bridal, cried, like a herald-at-arms: "This is the triumph of the Morival,

famous procuress of the good city of Paris!" The Regent was informed of this brutality; he severely reprimanded the Prince de Conti, who answered, with a shrug: "I should like to have seen you there, Monseigneur!"

The King's body was embalmed, his heart and bowels separately; the body was transported to the vaults of Saint-Denis. The ceremony was accompanied by the most odious profanity; one would have thought that wretches had been suborned to insult the bier of a King of France. The procession had been arranged with parsimonious magnificence; priests were almost entirely lacking, whether because they had not been invited, or that the Cardinal de Noailles had dispensed them from rendering the last duties to Père Le Tellier's penitent. A portion of the Court absented itself under the most frivolous pretexts; those who owed most to the late King did not come. The day was hot to suffocation, and it was beautifully fine. The crowd poured in from afar to see the pomp of the obsequies; but the last comers, led away by the example of the others, instead of silent attention, manifested the noisiest gaiety. The whole of the road from Paris to Saint-Denis was lined with tents, stalls, and wine-booths. People were eating, drinking, and laughing. The troops who formed the escort had their work cut out to open a road for the funeral car, which moved slowly on through a tumult of voices, insults, songs, and shouts. There was a moment, before reaching Saint-Denis, when furious hands would have torn in pieces the mortal remains of a King who had reigned seventy-two years, more than forty of which, thanks to his ministers, had been glorious. To disperse this flood of people, the prayers and offices were hurried through. The Regent had seemed ill at ease amidst these indecencies.

"Monseigneur," I said to him, "the people is a cowardly and savage beast; it fastens upon corpses."

On the morrow the following two lines were found written upon the tomb in which Louis XIV reposes:—

EPITAPH OF LOUIS

"A Saint-Denis comme à Versailles,
Il est sans coeur et sans entrailles." *

M. de Saint-Simon said, in his indignation against these out-

* At Saint-Denis, as at Versailles, he is without heart and without bowels.

rages upon the ashes of the dead: "I did not know the Carnival came in September." The fury of the people did not stop at this much; several statues of Louis XIV were mutilated during the night, others insulted; a placard was stuck up in the Place des Victoires: "Tyrant of bronze; he was ever so."

Satirists and libellers flung themselves on the renown of this King, whom they had all flattered, and for a month it was a struggle as to who should say most ill of him.

"Ah, well!" said the Duc d'Orléans to me one day, "I am worshipped and extolled to-day by the very same men who will hate and insult me after my death."

The *débuts* of the Regency were startling. It seems to me, however, that I had little share in them, for the Duc d'Orléans suddenly dispensed with me at his Councils, although I could never fathom the motives for this disgrace, which lasted until the end of the year. I found myself dismissed from the Palais-Royal, neglected by the Prince and by all; the shower of favours fell upon everybody except me, and I perceived that my presence had become insupportable to the Regent. I supposed that the satirical "addresses" of the Court had been maliciously attributed to me: for instance, the Duc d'Orléans found himself lodging "*At the Sign of Goodman Lot, Rue Jean-Pain-Mollet*"; Madame de Berri, "*at the Well of Love, Rue de la Truanderie*"; Madame de Nesle, "*at the Bawd's Head, Rue du Hasard.*" In fine, I was in despair to see the Regency turning to the advantage of men less able than myself. I was not rebuffed, however; I still went to pay my court to the Regent; I frequented the Palais-Royal, observing, listening, and making myself respected by my enemies. The Parliament was invested with the largest powers; the Gallican Church had triumphed over the Constitution; the princes, the great nobles, were satisfied; I alone was not. I was not even a member of any of the various Councils which had been formed, whose chiefs were in communication with the Council of Regency, composed of the Duc du Bourbon, the Comte de Toulouse, the Duc du Maine, the Chancellor, the Duc de Saint-Simon, the Marêchals de Villeroi, d'Harcourt, de Bezons, and the Marquis de Torcy. The Abbé Dubois was forgotten.

"Oh, the ingratitude of princes!" I kept repeating to all who would hear me.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE LETTER OF MADAME—EXPLANATIONS BETWEEN DUBOIS AND THE REGENT—HIS NOMINATION AS COUNCILLOR OF STATE—MADAME AT SAINT-CYR—ORIGIN OF LAW'S SYSTEM—PORTRAIT AND CHARACTER OF LAW—HIS PROJECTS—DUBOIS QUARRELS WITH THE MARQUIS DE VILLARS

A DISCOVERY which I made on the 31st of December revealed to me the causes of the Regent's neglect. I had stolen one morning into the cabinet of His Royal Highness before he had arrived. I began to shift the papers, in order to know what was passing. A letter came into my hands; I recognised Madame's writing, and was struck by sundry repetitions of my name. I secured the letter, which I carried off with me to peruse in a place of greater surety. I still preserve it carefully; it was dated from the first days of the Regency. Here are some extracts from it which do not flatter me. Madame must have been indeed stricken with a mania for correspondence before she came to write in French, which was not her habit, five or six pages to her son whom she saw every day:

"MY DEAR SON,—I have only one favour to ask you, in welcoming your Regency—that is, never to employ the infamous Abbé Dubois, who deserves to be hanged as high as Haman, without prejudice to his punishment below. This man, against whom I have a cause of complaint in the education he has given you, would sacrifice the State and you to his slightest interest. He does not know what virtue is, or at least he weighs it against current coin. I could wish you to have as little confidence in this Abbé as I have myself. I am astonished that you, who know him, should venture to rely on him; your greatest enemy would be preferable. But you are, indeed, one of your family; it is impossible to detach you from the people to whom you are accustomed. If lies could choke, he would be dead long ago. Do you remember that Madame de Hautefort said of him: 'The first truth that issues from his lips I will

have enshrined, in the fashion of a relic.' In truth, lying is the art in which he excels; the list of his impostures would reach from Paris to Rome, where there are not enough indulgences to absolve him. I believe that the word *arch* applies to all his qualities. He is an arch-rogue, an arch-liar, an arch-hypocrite, an arch-libertine, and, in a word, an arch-scoundrel. . . ."

Having read and pondered over Madame's letter, I repaired to the Regent, who received me coldly, with an air of repression. I had put on so afflicted an expression that he asked me with his wonted kindness if I were ill.

"Yes, Monseigneur," I replied; "I am dying daily, for disgrace kills."

"You are jesting, Abbé, or you are out of your wits; go to one of your abbeys to recover from your fatigues, restore your health, and put on a little flesh."

"Monseigneur, once I have said adieu to you, I am dead and buried."

"Very well! What do you want, absolution or extreme unction?"

"Monseigneur, here you are all-powerful. Will you leave the man who has raised you without employment?"

"It is not the finest part of your life; but it is impossible for me to satisfy your ambition now."

"Remember, I beg of you, that if you do not set me to work, I cannot remain with you with honour."

"Do not stay then, my dear Abbé. What can I do for you? Does not all France know that you are a rogue? Do you not know it yourself?"

"True, Monseigneur; but do you not also know that all men are rogues; that there is only a question of degree?"

"What, rascal, would you forget that a prince is a man?"

"Never, Monseigneur; I do not include princes nor present company in generalities of this kind. But, amongst the rogues, you should choose those who have the sharpest wits, and I have pretensions to be of that class."

"I like to see that you do yourself justice."

"Do you prefer, Monseigneur, to have to do with those inflexible spirits, proud of their integrity, who are always putting dots on the *i*'s? It is people like me you need; they adapt themselves to your will."

"Liars, rogues, scoundrels,

'Au demeurant les meilleurs fils du monde.'"

"You will be fortunate to find anyone who is my equal in a negotiation. I tell you, Madame misunderstands your interests. . . ."

"Who has told you that Madame was troubling her head about you, Abbé?"

"No one has told me; but I tell you so, Monseigneur. This is not what you promised me before you were Regent; I have served you faithfully, and I deserve a different recompense."

Thereupon I made a feint of wiping my eyes, and left hurriedly, without answering the Prince's summons to me to return.

On the morrow, the first day of the year 1716, I went at an early hour to offer my compliments and good wishes to His Royal Highness, whom I found still in bed. Madame de Parabère, his new mistress, was at his bedside. I was withdrawing, thinking the Prince to be particularly engaged, when he cried to me to enter, and made me sit down opposite the Parabère, whom I recognised.

"Dubois," said he, "thank this fair lady, who has taken an interest in you, and asks me to give you your New Year's gift."

"Madame," I cried, "I trust to Monseigneur for the acquittal of my debt; I can wish you nothing better than the love of so great a Prince."

"Abbé," interrupted the Regent, "I have just been informed of the death of the Archbishop of Sens."

"You will make me an Archbishop?"

"Not yet; but you are Secretary of State in his stead."

"When one of your ministers dies, remember that I am Dubois, of the wood of which they are made."

"What a grotesque face you have, M. Dubois!" said Madame de Parabère, laughing, and examining me from head to foot.

"Have no fear, Madame," I retorted; "some day I shall cut a fine figure."

"Dubois," resumed the Duc d'Orléans, "do not again accuse Madame of opposing your advancement; she thinks more good of you than she says."

"How many others, Monseigneur, say more than they think!"

"To conclude, Abbé, a little rectitude, I beseech you."

I retired in much satisfaction, without being piqued at the peals of laughter which Madame de Parabère threw at me. I walked about all day in the gardens and galleries of the Palais-Royal, saying to everyone, with an effusion of joy:

"You see a new Councillor of State."

I met the Abbé Bignon, the most envious of the envious. He stared at me with all his haughtiness. I suspected the post of Councillor of State would have pleased him as much as myself; I stabbed his pride to the heart with these words:

"Do you know, Monsieur, what they have made of me?"

"I do not believe they can ever make any good of you," he retorted.

"Do not flatter me, M. l'Abbé, or I may lose countenance."

"Yes, the reproach is severe; but when one is not of a certain birth, one ought to have the courage to refuse eminent dignities of the first order in the State."

I turned my back on the unmannerly fellow, and have always regretted that I did not chastise his insolence. Godefroy, Advocate to the Council, congratulated me more politely:

"My dear Abbé," said he, "I think you would be hard pressed for an answer were one to ask you: *Quid est justitia?*"

"What is justice? It is, first of all, to make me Councillor of State. And, if you care to continue your questions, you will find I am not at the end of my Latin."

On the 2nd of January, the King, who had lived at Vincennes since the death of Louis XIV, came to Paris to inhabit the Tuileries. I presented myself to Madame, to make a parade of my office, and get a little enjoyment out of her discomfiture. I ran across her on the staircase on her way to pay her respects to the young King.

"Here is a bird of ill-omen," she said, stopping.

"Madame," I replied, "I came to thank you for the grace Monseigneur the Regent has just done me."

"Keep your thanks for others, Master Abbé; I do not even know what the grace is; and, if my opinion had been asked, you would have had to thank nobody."

"Madame, His Royal Highness has just appointed me Councillor of State."

"You, Councillor of State! A pretty Councillor of State! Is my son a raving lunatic? I salute you, Councillor of State."

She left me laughing in my sleeve at her anger and surprise.

Madame was a malicious German, who bit when she seemed to kiss. She had spent her whole life in hating folk, to pass the time. She saw no harm in a piece of treachery, where it was a question of vexing an enemy. She was actuated by a like motive when, a few days after the King's death, she paid a visit to Madame de Maintenon, in her retirement at the Convent of Saint-Cyr. The Maintenon shuddered when she saw her enter her chamber.

"Madame," she said, "what are you doing or seeking here?"

"I have come to mingle my tears with those of the person whom the King loved best."

"'Tis you, Madame, whom the King loved best, and not I, who never flattered him. Nothing, moreover, has been left undone to injure me with him; he has told me this himself; and truly, were I not a Christian woman, I should never forgive my enemies."

After this petty piece of vengeance she withdrew.

The first use I made of my credit was to urge the Regent to make the tax-collectors disgorge. My hatred of Bourvalais, the richest of these upstarts, was here in harmony with *justice*. Bourvalais had laid the foundation of his vast fortune under Pontchartrain. He was by origin a little vagabond, without father or mother, living by his vices; he became a lackey, then a clerk, then Secretary of the Council and Controller of Finance in Burgundy. Everything succeeded with him, as though it had been pre-ordained; his wealth accumulated so rapidly, that he soon had palaces, town and country houses, carriages and mistresses; nothing came amiss to him so long as he could make money. It was of him that the proverb of the treasures arose: "Little streams make great rivers." His millions did not redeem his ignoble hideousness, his low fashions of speaking and acting, and his lackey-like insolence. I had reasons for wishing him more harm than good.

One of my kinsmen, postmaster at Verdun, knowing me to be much advanced in honours, came to Paris in 1712 to propose a new scheme of taxation which I was to get accepted. My position did not permit me to sell his idea. I persuaded him to seek out Bourvalais, as if it had been at his own impulse, and acquaint him with his project. I reserved to myself a share

of the benefices. Bourvalais undertook to get the tax adopted by the Council, and gave a bill for twelve thousand livres in favour of my poor kinsman, as a payment for his advice. I only received two thousand livres out of this sum. He went to draw his money at the appointed time, but he discovered that the bill had been stolen from him. He made a claim, attested, but could get nothing; he was put to the door. In despair, and not daring to confess his misadventure to me, he addressed himself casually to an ex-officer, a sturdy knave, who undertook, on condition of going shares, to recover the whole sum.

In fact, having begged the unfortunate postmaster to await him in a place he designated, he effected an entry into the Hôtel de Bourvalais, and, pistol in hand, forced him to reimburse the lost bill. Bourvalais made no resistance, not even an objection, counted out the sum into the hands of the man with the pistol, and even escorted him politely to the foot of the stairs.

"Monsieur," said the rogue, "my accomplice awaits me at such and such a place; good-night."

Bourvalais, who saw himself in safety, replied with cries of "Stop thief!" The officer vanished, and could never be traced; but the miserly collector reflected on his counsel, and the postmaster, arrested, tried, and condemned on Bourvalais' accusation, came to a sad end. He is the only member of my family, up to the present, who has been hanged.

I had reprisals to make, therefore, against Bourvalais, who was so universally detested that at the performance of Lesage's *Turcaret*, the pit started shouting: "Name him!" At another time, when he was present in a box at that scathing satire on financiers, the actor who played the principal part paused to say aloud: "Gentlemen, there is a person present who could better fill my part." It was with a joy then, that Court and Town shared, that I succeeded in establishing a court of justice to try these blood-suckers of the people. Fourquieux, who was president, knew the art of tracking down the guilty; Bourvalais, however, defended himself with such vigour, that he was released from prison after a sentence of three years, and one of his mistresses, since become the Regent's, even reinstated him in a portion of his property. Many people shared the spoils; the Duchesse de Berri seized all the plate; the Duc de Guiches his carriages; I

contented myself with several fine estates in Brie. M. Fourquieux, in memory of the trial, kept the huge silver vases which Bourvalais used at table to cool his wines and liqueurs: hence his nickname of keeper of the seals (*sceaux*). Another tax-collector, son of a gentleman of Lyons, had a cellar full of Tokay wine, representing a value of a million; his treasury was inspected, found empty, and he was only granted till the evening to make good the deficiency of sixty thousand livres. He was condemned to death, but by the clemency of His Royal Highness, the sentence was commuted into one of perpetual imprisonment. His confiscated property passed into various hands. It is to him I owe my well-garnished cellar; the son-in-law of this collector was sufficiently a connoisseur of good fare to regret these exquisite wines, if not his father-in-law.

The war to the death waged against the tax-collectors was a prelude to the establishment of a general bank. Money was growing scarce in the King's coffers, when the appearance of Law caused it to rain millions for more than four years. Law is a man of genius in his fashion, and the harm he did was not altogether his fault. The Regent spent and ruined his credit by casting money broadside. It was Lord Stairs who established Law in France; they were both Scots, and it is said that the men of that nation are not averse to giving one another a helping hand. They were also acquainted with the gambling hells of London, where Law had won enormous sums. One day when I was talking to the latter of the philosopher's stone, he said with conviction that he had found it.

"You are jesting," we said.

"I can tell you my secret; to make gold out of paper."

"With paper? It is all very well to say so; when shall we see this masterpiece?"

"In about three or four years."

Law confided some idea of his system to the Earl of Stairs, who approved of it as an agreeable madness.

"Indeed," he said, "it might succeed with a nation of madmen, but in England, never."

"Very well, I will go to France."

Stairs, who, since the foundation of the Regency, was inseparable from the Regent, induced him to found a banking company and bring Law upon the scene.

Law was the son of a goldsmith or usurer of Edinburgh, who left him a fortune, for the goldsmiths of Great Britain generally lend money on pledges. This Law, who derived nothing from his birth and education but a prodigious science of calculation, modelled his conduct and expenses on the example of members of the great world; he won large sums of money and lost largely. He was more completely unfortunate in his love affairs; for, having become amorous of a coquette named Mrs Wilson, he was challenged to a duel by the husband, to whom he sought to prove by figures the numerous infidelities of his wife. Poor Wilson was killed, after the rule, which ever makes the husband succumb to the lover. Law fled to escape the consequences of the law. The widow followed him, to have some compensation for the husband of whom her lover had deprived her. Law was so much in her toils that he has not yet been able to get rid of her, and she has ever since passed as his wife. She was a little Englishwoman, lively, elegant, and determined; white-skinned and fair-haired, and, in spite of everything, faithful to her Scot. The Duc d' Orléans, who would have liked shares in her as well as in the bank, had his pains for nothing. She never spoke of her husband save with glowing admiration. Law, infatuated with this woman, and lying under the weight of a capital charge, in order to live, devised a financial system, which was a fine thing before it was ruined by extravagances. But for twenty years he offered it to all the sovereigns of Europe without meeting with anything but refusals and contempt. England, Scotland, Switzerland, Italy, treated him rather less well than a quack. The King of Sicily, a great mathematician, let him explain all the chances of the system, calculated, approved, verified, and, after a thousand eulogies, said to Law:

"Monsieur, if I was powerful enough to let myself be ruined, I should not hesitate a moment in giving you the preference."

During these always unsuccessful journeys, Law, to maintain his patience, was in the habit of playing with a good fortune which had little resemblance to chance. His industry was more remunerative than his hopes; finally, he arrived in France, in the latter days of Louis XIV. Desmerets, a minister in search of expedients and excessively short of money, received him with respect, and declared in favour of his system; but the aged King recoiled before an operation so vast and hazardous; he preferred

to keep his old debts rather than run the risk of increasing them. Law, however, convinced that France was more adapted than any other country to reap the fruits of his system, waited patiently for the King's death, to scatter his *golden dust* in men's eyes.

Law, when I saw him in 1715, was forty years old, or at least, had that appearance. I have no liking for those Scots faces, strongly characterised by tawny eyes and red hair. The Court ladies, doubtless for love of the bank and its banker, very nearly made red hair the fashion. Law was of middle height, well-set, gracious, and winning; he was noticeable for a peculiar gesture, that of a man counting out money. He spoke all languages, and especially French, with a disagreeable accent; polished in his manners, he preferred to smile instead of addressing a word, or replying to anyone. A strange alteration was effected in him by the influence of his fortune. So long as play was his only means of subsistence, he fought tooth and nail at a game of cards and was never wounded; once his bank established, he became an incredible coward.

"Because," said he, "I am like the goose with the golden eggs, which, once dead, would be worth no more than an ordinary bird."

Finally, great prosperity rendered him proud to insolence, and I reproached him with this one day:

"Law," said I, "I hope you will never become King of France; you would crush us all like ants."

Stairs was so intimately bound up with Law, that it was inevitable he should have a deadly quarrel with him when the latter had gained him more than three millions. He did his best to urge on the creation of a bank on the model of those of Holland and England. Law wished nothing better than to get his foot in the stirrup, and, indeed, his principles were so reasonable that I was the first to be seduced by them. Stairs, who was never out of the Palais-Royal, gradually worked upon the Regent's enthusiasm for the formation, with the State funds, of a bank, entrusted to Law in the capacity of director. The Duc d'Orléans, however, all on fire at first, cooled down considerably when it became a question of drawing up the edict; it was then that Law brought his cunning manœuvres into play, lavishing money and promises. They were too well aware of my credit with the Prince, not to employ it at any cost. Stairs sent

for me privately, and Law, whom he presented to me as a genius, beat me on his own ground, proving to me the advantages of the bank, advantages clear enough to me, since, in addition to a sum payable after the inauguration of the system, they gave me the first thirty out of the twelve thousand shares to be issued. I entered warmly into these magnificent plans, and gave the Regent no peace until he had agreed to everything.

"The Devil!" he said to me, "you make a warm partisan, and I will postpone utilising your talents."

"Command, Monseigneur, there may be bad advocates, but there are no bad causes."

I came out with honour, and even persuaded the Regent not to risk the public finances, as Law offered to furnish the funds from his company. The edict was published in the month of May. Promises, as we know, cost no more than the making; Law was lavish of them; his aim, according to the edict, was to increase the circulation of money, to put an end to usury, to provide for vehicles between Paris and the provinces, to give foreigners a means of safe investment within the kingdom, and finally to give the people facilities for the sale of supplies and the payment of taxes. A concession of twenty years was granted him. This period of twenty years was reduced to four. The bank, at its origin, did not seem likely to swallow up everyone's fortune, as was the case with the Mississippi Company, founded subsequently. Law, in one word, was an admirable financier; but the young King, having heard it stated that Law was a Protestant, informed the Regent of his fears in these words:

"He is not a Catholic, Monsieur; beware of trusting him."

Law locked up his projects for the future in his own breast, and his cunning resembled good faith; but I fathomed him when, on bringing me the sum of which I have spoken, he said in my ear:

"M. l'Abbé, become my partner, and in three years you will be able to buy the city of Paris."

"No," I replied; "I have too much to lose."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES — HIS MISFORTUNES — HIS PORTRAIT—NEGOTIATIONS WITH ENGLAND—LETTERS FROM DUBOIS TO LORD STANHOPE—DUBOIS' MISSION TO THE HAGUE —THE BOOKS AND PICTURES—CONFERENCES—THE SECOND JOURNEY—DUBOIS IN HANOVER—GEORGE I—THE KING'S DINNER—ROBERT WALPOLE—DUBOIS AT THE HAGUE

THE Chevalier de Saint-Georges was still at Avignon, where he intended to remain, so he said, until he was driven out. The destiny of this Prince was the result of the last homily of his father, James II, who thought far less of his lost kingdom than of his devotions, and who had nothing better to give his son on his death-bed than these Jesuitical counsels:

"However fine a crown may be, there comes a time when it is quite indifferent; respect your mother, love the King of France as your benefactor, and put your religion before all human grandeur."

The King of France, his benefactor, signed the Treaty of Utrecht, which annulled all the rights of James III, the title under which he had been recognised by Louis XIV, in answer to the tearful prayers of his mother. On the death of his sister, Queen Anne, his partisans urged him to turn, or to declare himself Protestant, in order to regain his throne. The recollection of his father's last words operated on that timorous soul; like poor James II, the son lost three kingdoms for a mass. He first retired to Bar, to the Duke of Lorraine, who ceaselessly encouraged his fruitless perseverance, but had nothing but advice to give him. At last the Prince of Wales, or King James III, obtained some secret assistance from Louis XIV, and landed in Scotland with slender resources but large stores of hope. He arrived just in time to complete the ruin of his cause, and after sundry successes made a retreat which resembled a flight: it was at the moment of the death of Louis XIV. The ambassador of England, the Earl of Stairs,

had a mission from his Government to hinder the Pretender's return to France. Stairs reproached the Regent, therefore, with having favoured the Scottish expedition in despite of all the treaties of the late King. This gave him an opportunity to demand that Stuart should be handed over to the English Parliament, which had tried him in his absence and condemned him to death for the crime of high treason. The Regent refused to commit this treachery; the refusal was expected. He was then asked not to afford a shelter to the fugitive Prince in France; he consented for the sake of peace, but secretly warned the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, who regained our territory, returned to Paris, reappeared at Saint-Germain, and narrowly missed assassination at the hands of agents of the Court of London. The Regent was indignant at this violation of rights of nations; but to appease him I saturated him with political *whys* and *wherefores*. The Chevalier de Saint-Georges made no great stir at Avignon, where he waited for better days. The English cabinet persisted in demanding his extradition or exile. I think that Louis XIV being dead, and his promises likewise, it would have been well to hand over the Pretender to George I, who would have been content to keep him in some safe seclusion. This would have assured the tranquillity of England; and the interest of France spoke more loudly than all the prejudices of hospitality. Now that the Chevalier de Saint-Georges has a son, we see the war of succession perpetuated; but since Alberoni failed in this enterprise, I doubt if anyone else will succeed.

I confess I set small stock upon ministers who lose their places, or kings who lose their crowns; they are ordinarily but sorry sirs, for genius always picks itself up however low it may have fallen. The Chevalier de Saint-Georges is the living proof of this unhappy lack of capacity; he has all the qualities of a gallant fit to shine with women, that is all; he will play his part well in church, in the bed-chamber; but he would be supremely out of place on a throne. His face is regular and handsome, but always absent or melancholy; his manners are noble; his speech is unaccompanied by wit, and harps incessantly on his pretensions to royalty. I have never liked him, and do not think he repays me with ingratitude. I happened to say, after seeing him fawning on this one and on that, that he had the air of asking

alms; this *mot* was repeated to him, and he manifested his gratitude less sillily than was his wont.

"M. l'Abbé," he said to me mildly, "are you jealous of me, and do you take my crown of England for a benefice, that I withhold from you?"

Assuredly I have not served him as I might have done in my negotiations; nevertheless, I have refused large sums of money rather than deliver him to his enemies. Later, I made use of him for my projects, and I owe him at least the half of my red hat.

England, through her ambassador, obstinately continued her attacks upon the Chevalier de Saint-Georges. A canal which had been commenced at Mardick, near Dunkirk, served as a pretext for a rupture with France; the Regent was desirous of peace, in order to repair the disasters which had attended the latter end of the reign of Louis XIV. In spite of the chiefs of the Council, who were unwilling to appear to attach too much value to the British alliance, the Regent fawned upon the Earl of Stairs, and, through him, the English ministers.

The latter had but one reply to all these advances:

"Let the Chevalier de Saint-Georges leave France, and the Mardick Canal be abandoned."

The overtures for peace seemed likely to finish in a universal war; Holland and the Emperor were endeavouring to goad England against France. It was in this dilemma that the Regent had recourse to what small influence I possessed. In order that my negotiations might not seem inspired by him, I adopted a diplomatic tone in my correspondence with my friend Stanhope, and pretended to be anxious for a good understanding between our two masters, "to the end that he might drink only of the finest wines of France, and I of the cider of Goldpepin, instead of our rough Norman cider." But Lord Stanhope, who undertook this important business, was not disposed to carry it to a successful issue; I even fear that he employed his credit with George I to defeat it.

About this time, the House of Austria proposed an offensive and defensive alliance to Holland and England. To gain time, the Regent wrote to M. de Châteauneuf, our ambassador at the Hague, bidding him declare his projects of alliance with England and the Republic to the States-General. Stanhope gave me notice that he was about to accompany King George to Hanover;

this was an invitation to me to join him. The Regent had long destined me for this extraordinary and secret mission. The Maréchal d' Huxelles, who watched with envy my growing power in the Regency, did all he could to prevent my journey to the Hague. He almost convinced the Prince that in a private conversation it would be difficult to surmount the prejudices of Lord Stanhope, whose views were diametrically opposite to those of His Royal Highness. "Moreover," said he, "it is impossible to keep the Abbé Dubois' journey secret; it will be in vain for him to allege private or frivolous motives; who will believe that a Councillor of State, honoured with the confidence of His Royal Highness, has taken such a step uselessly and without aim? There is no doubt, then, that this negotiation would have to be abandoned, although M. de Châteauneuf might carry it through in Holland." My eloquence, however, won the day over the jealousy of the Marquis d' Huxelles.

Before my departure, I offered a specimen of my tact to the Regent, who knew how much freedom I put into my correspondence. Indeed, in the gravest matters I employ the most comical expressions, provided they exactly portray my idea. I have a horror of law-court harangues; to speak naturally, vivaciously, and right to the point—that is my method. His Royal Highness would fain have persuaded me that I did not possess the befitting dignity to treat as a plenipotentiary with ministers, the Grand-Pensioner, and, perhaps, with the King himself.

"I take up your challenge, Monseigneur," said I; "I suppose Fontenelle seems to you, as he does to me, the most skilled in point of style? Another, if you prefer. Well! set a subject for a political letter, which we will both of us treat separately. I will wager that mine will be the letter of a diplomatist, his of an academician."

It was arranged we should write to M. de Châteauneuf; Fontenelle and I took up our pens, and I carried our two letters to the Regent, begging him to choose the one which suited him best; the first he read made him laugh with pity:

"Is it you who make points and phrases so nicely adjusted, Dubois?" he asked.

"Decide, Monseigneur, which of the two letters pleases you most."

"As if I could hesitate. One is as elegant, adroit, and well put as the other is ridiculous, foolish, and painfully elaborated."

"Thanks for your praise, Monseigneur; do not tell Fontenelle, I beg you; I should blush to be thought cleverer than the cleverest of the academicians."

It has been alleged that I took advantage of the letter of Fontenelle, upon whom I laid the blame of the stupidities of my own. To believe people of good faith who attack me with libels, satires, and caricatures, I am a prize fool. I should like to see the wittiest of them all keep the place I hold, only for a week.

I set off on the 4th of July, making no great stir, and as though I were going to Holland to buy books and pictures. I was accompanied by Manet only. I arrived at the Hague shortly before Stanhope, and deployed all my little ruses, hiding my title of ambassador extraordinary. I went, under the pretext of seeing some horses that M. de Châteauneuf had to sell, to have an interview with him in his stables, and inform him of my mission. We settled what course to take, without my being taken for aught else than an amateur of horses. I was patiently waiting for my friend Stanhope, whilst I surrounded myself with a pile of books, which gave me more the appearance of a scholar than a diplomatist. Stanhope found me in the midst of my tomes and ancient canvases; we embraced like old friends, and I spoke to him at first of everything except the projected alliance.

"My dear man," he said, "are you going to set up as a bookseller and picture-dealer . . .?"

"Do not laugh," I replied; "I have been acquiring objects of value, a part of which I shall sell in France."

"I knew you when you had more frivolous tastes."

"When I was younger, 'tis true; but will you take a glance at this catalogue of books to be sold at Leyden; the librarian of King William spent his life in collecting them."

"Pray whence came this passion for pictures?"

"From the vast size of my fortune, which is difficult to administer. You find me ravished at my latest acquisition; the picture of the 'Seven Sacraments,' by Poussin, was brought away from France by Dutch merchants; I am proud of having bought it back."

"No doubt His Royal Highness will give you double its price. . . ."

"You remind me of a letter which concerns you. 'I have learned,' says the Prince, 'that there are movements at the

Court of London against the Duke of Argyll, favourite of the heir-presumptive. As I know Lord Stanhope is a friend of that nobleman, and very well looked on by the Prince of Wales himself, I am afraid of his being implicated in this storm. If you should happen to see him when he passes the Hague, I authorise you, my dear Abbé, to offer him from me good offices, friends, money—in a word, all that depends upon me.'"

"Will you inform His Royal Highness of my sincere gratitude. I am in no way compromised in the affair of the Duke of Argyll; but I thank from the bottom of my heart those who deign to be interested in my good or evil fortune."

I had brought Stanhope to the point of conferring with me as to the alliance to be treated of between England and France; he bristled with difficulties which I had to refute one after the other. He insisted that there should be no mention made of the Treaty of Utrecht, which was offensive to the House of Austria. I agreed to the following conditions, beyond which I was forbidden to pass:—

(1.) The guarantee of the English Succession in the Protestant line, at the same time as the guarantee of the Treaties of Utrecht in their entirety should be agreed to.

(2.) To compel the Chevalier de Saint-Georges to leave Avignon, and to fulfil this article between the signing of the alliance and the exchange of ratifications.

(3.) To refuse asylum to rebels against Great Britain.

(4.) To make the opening of the Mardick Canal of such a kind that ships of war could not enter it.

(5.) To treat conjointly and on the same footing with the States-General of Holland.

It was not without exertion that, after these conferences, which lasted far into the night, I brought round Lord Stanhope to my opinions; he promised every success to my negotiation provided that I obtained from the Regent a loyal explanation of the past, positive assurances for the future, and, above all, a formal renunciation of the Pretender's cause. I resolved to return to Paris rather than confide my secrets to others. On the eve of my departure I invited Stanhope to supper, and we sealed our old friendship with reciprocal confidences. Only, as I laid down the law very despotically, blaming kings and ministers, he asked me if I had studied public rights in Turkey. Indeed,

my merit lay in address, or intrigue, if you like, and I had not learned diplomacy by rule.

I was back in Paris towards the last days of July. I repaired secretly to the Regent, who embraced me with joy, for I had written him the details of my interviews with Stanhope, and he could see how much ground I had gained in a few hours.* The Maréchal d'Huxelles, who dreaded the success of my negotiations, was of opinion that the Regent should send by courier a memorandum of his offers to the King of England; but I had no trouble in persuading him that my presence was indispensable. Madame, to whom His Royal Highness spoke of it, said that if ruses, thieving, or deceit were required, I was an incomparable man. My departure was settled then; but this time I had to conceal the ambassador under the title of the Chevalier de Saint-Albin. I thus baptised myself, to vex the Abbé de Saint-Albin, who was mighty proud of being a bastard of the Duc d'Orléans.

I set off in a post-chaise which I bought from M. Crozat. Of my servants I took only Manet, whose wages were doubled that he might serve me as interpreter; Forceville, my *valet-de-chambre*; Sourdeval, my secretary, and Chef, my cook, the indispensable adjunct of an ambassador.

I had a large sum on me in bills of exchange upon a Brussels banker. On the road, I thought of procuring a confidential courier; I regretted already that I had not chosen one myself at Paris. Manet, to whom I said a few words on the subject, said:

"Monsieur, if you will permit me, I have the man you need."

"How did you know him?"

"I do not know him."

"Where is he?"

"In the hostelry where I have been taking refreshment; he drank so heartily that he must be a good fellow."

I caused the carriage to halt until Manet had brought me his *protégé*. He was no youth, but a lusty fellow of forty, robust, thick-set, and of a joyous countenance. It seemed to me I had

* The dispatches having relation to this important mission are to be found in the "Correspondence of Cardinal Dubois," published by M. de Sevelinges. This work, much esteemed by diplomatists, contains proofs of the authenticity of these memoirs. [*Editor's Note.*]

seen him somewhere before; he had the same idea, for he gazed at me fixedly.

"What is your name?" said I.

"Maroy, Monsieur."

"Maroy! That is a name which sounds familiar to me."

"It is possible; I have been courier to the Duc de Lorraine. . . ."

"But really, it is you then, little rascal . . . !"

"And you, Monsieur de Saint-Albin, are you not the Abbé Dubois?"

"Silence, Maroy! you are still under my ferule! I am pleased to see you, bad lot that you are; but what have you done with the education I gave you?"

"It is like myself, it has played the truant."

"Do you consent to enter my service?"

"Just as you were in that of my father and myself!"

I merely laughed at Maroy's insolence, and gave Manet the task of indoctrinating him. This Maroy, who left me when I became cardinal, had done honour to his master; he had run away from the paternal roof, but, unlike the Prodigal Son, had never returned; he had plied all the trades that an honest man may; he had lost all that could be lost in bad company; he had served the Duc de Lorraine and the Chevalier de Saint-Georges as courier, and when he had grown used to my somewhat brutal manners, I grew used to his own, which were no more gentle. Thus one of us was always in a temper; otherwise, we understood each other well. The impertinent knave was so set upon imitating me that he often passed as myself with my mistresses: *Inde irae.*

I reached Brussels about five o'clock in the evening, and to my great disappointment discovered I had lost my purse. I needed money to lodge and feed all my people. I repaired then with Sourdeval and Maroy to the banker who was to pay my bills of exchange. The banker had gone to a merry-making and would not return till very late, I was told by a valet who was in charge of the house. I swore, to appease my anger a little; the cashier arrived, but without money, and promised it me for the following morning at ten o'clock. I could do no more; I obtained credit until then, owing to my favourable appearance. At ten o'clock I was at the banker's door with my two body-guards, Sourdeval,

the gentlest of men, and Maroy, the most passionate after myself.

"Heavens, Monsieur," said the cashier, "my master is still asleep after the fatigues of last night. It would be cruel to awake him; come back some other time."

"What a misfortune to be at the mercy of lackeys!" I cried; "this rogue here wastes my time and makes me miss business of the utmost importance."

"'Sdeath," added Maroy, who was already endeavouring to copy me, "if the rascal had his deserts I should cut off his two ears and nail them up like a sign before his door."

"Gentlemen," replied the poor cashier, gripping the keys of his coffers, "insults as much as you wish, but spare me blows."

"I have an itch to cut something away from you," continued Maroy. "Choose; your ears or your nose?"

"Thieves! Murder!" bellowed the cashier.

The banker thought someone had designs on his coffers; he sprang out of bed and rushed down in his shirt, pistols in hand. This sight brought a calm, and I imposed silence on Maroy.

"What is all this?" asked the banker.

"I want money," I replied; "I have been here twice with my bills of exchange, and this cursed lackey refuses to pay them."

"Messieurs les Français," said the banker, "I ought first of all to pay you for all this noise by beating you for interest of the money, and by summoning the Imperial Guard, which would make you lower your voice."

"Monsieur," I interrupted, alarmed at the consequences of my violence, "let us say no more about it, but pay us."

"M. le Marquis de Saint-Prié, Governor of the Low Countries, would be glad to know what this very urgent business is."

"Monsieur, excuse my servant; he defends my interests more keenly than I do myself."

"See that these brawlers are paid—all in silver and copper, if possible."

With these terrible words the banker gave us a look of immense dignity and majestically withdrew. The Imperial Guard with which he had threatened me, seemed to me at my back, and I fled fearfully at the prospect of seeing an ambassador of His Most Christian Majesty in prison. Maroy, who was only strong when he had my support, followed or even preceded me like a

faithful courier. Sourdeval was not so much moved; he sat down familiarly by the side of the cashier, who was beginning to count out the sum in small coins; we should have wanted two horses to carry it. Sourdeval flattered the cashier so diplomatically, that by three o'clock he had received the whole sum in gold. 'Tis true I paid the price of this concession. I had not thought it prudent to await him in Brussels, and he only rejoined me at Louvain, where I lay, my mind still haunted by the Imperial troops. I recalled the banker's threats when my negotiation was finished, and had I made a complaint to the Marquis de Saint-Prié, he would not have shrunk from imprisonment as a punishment for the insolence that was shown me; but I was already accustomed to pardon injuries; that, too, is a form of vengeance. I contented myself with counselling the banker to be less brutal in future.

Whilst traversing the Austrian Low Countries, I found myself more than once embarrassed in other ways; I understood less German than my horses, and had no other interpreter than Manet, who believed he spoke that language, or at least had made me believe it. The devil took us to Louvain, to a German inn, where we talked a mighty lot without making ourselves understood.

"Order some new-laid eggs," said I to Manet.

He jabbered a few words, and the hostess brought me a flagon of Rhine wine.

"Manet," I cried angrily, "is she making a jest of me? You had best to chuck her in the Mardick Canal!"

It was an expression I had adopted since my embassy. Manet spoke again to the host, who appeared to understand him, and then put a pitcher of beer in front of me. I could no longer restrain myself, and I flung myself upon Manet, crying:

"Are we in the tower of Babel, pray? I must spit the cursed knave!"

Mine host, Sourdeval, and Chef fled away; only Manet did not budge. I drew my sword with such vigour that the hilt was left in my hand, but not the blade. The rascal Manet, who feared lest some day he might not get off without two or three slashes in the belly, had taken precautions against accidents. The sight of my inoffensive weapon calmed my rage, and I burst into a peal of hearty laughter. Sourdeval returned, and was a mighty adroit substitute for the incompetent Manet; he took a pencil and drew a hen and eggs. I was served as I desired.

I arrived at Hanover, greatly inconvenienced by a retention of urine, which I did not mean to flaunt through the streets after the manner of Maroy. In spite of my prohibiting the persons of my suite from leaving the inn, where I had descended with much mystery, he teased the women and girls, proclaiming aloud his quality of courier to an ambassador. I was informed of it in sufficient time to bid him hold his tongue. Stanhope, informed of my arrival, came to see me secretly, until such time when I should be in a condition to present myself before His Britannic Majesty. M. d' Yberville had seconded me so warmly in London, that we were almost agreed with England. At this point, I learned that the Marquis de Louville, ex-commander of the Royal Guard of the Musketeers of Philip V, had not been received by that Prince, to whom his duty was to excuse the alliance of France with England. My zeal was redoubled. I flattered myself I should reap considerable honour from my negotiation, which was regarded by most as infeasible. 'Tis true that difficulties multiplied on every side. However, I do not think that, as Madame has often said, my Lord Stairs aimed at embroiling the Regent with England, by representing him as the secret ally of the Pretender. His Royal Highness never furnished money or arms to the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, and his only mistake was in not interfering with him whilst he loitered in France. On the other hand, Stairs could not have kept his mask so long; he shared our pleasures, our *fêtes*, and nothing transpired on his part. In short, what will not calumny invent? People have gone so far as to pretend that Stairs had had interviews with M. Benderitter, the Emperor's envoy, with the intent to form a league to dethrone the King of Spain, and replace him by the King of Sicily. Stairs can be neither a spy nor a traitor; he owes almost his whole fortune to the Regent.

Stanhope spoke so favourably of me to George I, that he expressed a wish to see me. I was presented to him by my friend, and the welcome given me would have quite won me over to England, if I had not been already convinced by a thousand reasons. George I, who was only fifty-six years of age, had an expression of German frankness which he did not belie; he was not fettered by his royal dignity, and did not allow others to feel embarrassed by it. His smile suggested a cordiality the most opposed to the etiquette of courts. He spoke with an affable

air, preferring to employ French, and his kindness was apparent in all he said. His daughter, the Queen of Prussia, who was on her way through Hanover at that time, displayed equal benevolence to me.

"M. de Saint-Albin," said the Queen, "you would have done well to bring us the French fashions."

"Madame," I replied, "I had not the honour of being your plenipotentiary."

Five days later, Maroy had given such proof of his diligence, that he returned with the newest Paris toilettes. The Queen thanked me, and paid me ten times their value.

I was admitted at dinner to their Majesties' private concert, with Stanhope and Robert Walpole, the King's favourite minister. He is an able man, although nowadays they call him the *Father of Corruption*, and I think with him that there is a tariff for every conscience. For the rest, it is amazing to hear him talk of money; he draws up the most admirable financial projects, and I have no doubt he will surpass Law should the fancy take him. The dinner was spent in discussion of the alliance and all points were practically settled; so that at dessert nothing remained but to obtain the consent of Holland to the same conditions. There were frequent allusions to the Pretender, and the King expressed himself on this subject without animosity; he even pitied him in terms worthy of both alike.

"In your place, Sire," said Walpole, carelessly, "I would offer him two or three millions to renounce his pretensions."

"The two or three millions," retorted Stanhope, "would be exchanged for powder and arms. This time the whole of Scotland would adopt the Stuart cause."

"Gentlemen," said the King, "the Chevalier de Saint-Georges will have no lack of arms and money in France to form expeditions."

"Sire," I cried, with a grieved air, "be generous, and do not force me to defend the honour of the King of France to you."

"The King of France is not touched by the reproach I make; but his Roman Catholic clergy, who look upon us as heretics."

"You repay them in kind, Sire, and praise God religious warfare is confined to the bull *Unigenitus*."

"I have in my hands," said the King, "proofs of the understanding which exists between the Chevalier de Saint-Georges

and your bishops. That of Bayeux, for instance, M. de Nesmont, allowed King James II a pension of thirty thousand livres, half of which the son still draws. . . ."

"That is a point to elucidate," said Stanhope.

"Sire," I said, with a laugh, to turn the conversation, "you do not know that dear M. de Nesmont?"

"Do you take me for the Pretender, M. de Saint-Albin? cried King George, filling his glass.

"Heaven forbid, Sire! but to return to the Bishop of Bayeux, I will only quote one trait which will enable you better to appreciate what man he is. M. de Nesmont is of a virgin innocence; but you must not judge his conduct by his utterances, which are bold to the verge of rashness. A woman dare not confess to him for fear of the grotesque questions he puts to his penitents. He is mighty fond of preaching, and his sermons have quite another eloquence than that of the pulpit. He had assisted at a very brilliant wedding; the day after in his sermon he began to thunder against weddings in terms so diverting that his audience laughed in his face. A good curate, who had listened gravely to this quaint outburst, lifted up his voice and said: 'Monseigneur, nevertheless, our Lord Himself went to the wedding at Cana in Galilee.' 'You are right,' he answered, after a moment's reflection, 'He went; but He had much better not have gone.'"

"There is a Papist who is half mad," said Stanhope, with a burst of laughter.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit!" I added.

"Gentlemen," interposed the King, "I propose a toast to the Pretender."

"You, Sire!" I cried.

"It is not the first time, M. de Saint-Albin. At the last carnival, a lovely woman, attached to the Stuarts, recognised me through my disguise; this was how I behaved towards her. She feigned not to know with whom she had to do, and spoke to me of the Chevalier de Saint-Georges with passionate devotion. I made a semblance of sharing her opinions, and she doubtless suspected I was concealing my real mind from her. She led me to a buffet, and, filling two glasses, 'To the Pretender's health!' she said. 'With all my heart,' I replied; 'I drink with a good will to the health of those who are unfortunate.' These very natural words won over this lady to my cause."

"Ah, Sire!" cried I, "if the Chevalier de Saint-Georges were to hear you, he would ask for your friendship."

"I should grant it him," answered the King, nobly.

I took leave of His Majesty and of Stanhope, and, all the conditions of the treaty being settled, I left Hanover for The Hague, where I was to find Lord Cadogan and Horace Walpole, brother of the minister, who had full powers for the signature of the alliance. This was again delayed. My desire to eclipse the ordinary ambassador of France induced me to give the preference to his hotel, in which to establish myself with a great train of people under my true name of Dubois. The Marquis de Châteauneuf witnessed my arrival with as little satisfaction as had been displayed of old by the Maréchal de Tallard in London.

CHAPTER XXX

THE MARQUIS DE CHÂTEAUNEUF; HIS FOOLISH TRAITS—THE DIAMOND BELT—THE SNUFF-BOXES—MADAME DE CHÂTEAUNEUF—DUBOIS CHANGES HIS SECRETARY—LETTER TO THE MARQUIS DE NOCÉ—HEINSIUS—LOUVOIS' INSOLENCE—LORD CADOGAN—ROBERT WALPOLE—THE CONVENTION BETWEEN FRANCE AND ENGLAND—SIGNING OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE—LETTER FROM THE KING OF ENGLAND—DEPARTURE FROM THE HAGUE—THE MYSTERIOUS WARNING—RETURN TO THE PALAIS-ROYAL

THE Marquis de Châteauneuf is a goose all over; I know no man more infatuated with his ancestors; he is happy whenever he has an opportunity of speaking of that most high and puissant Seigneur, Charles de l'Aubespine, Marquis de Châteauneuf, rival of the Cardinal de Richelieu with the lovely Duchesse de Chevreuse, and prisoner at the Bastille. Then his pale face glows, and he laughs to himself. He bristles all over with little ruses, which are only ridiculous or useless. I should seem to be judging him unjustly were I to be silent upon two important facts which he relates to all comers, whenever his wife says to him, after the pattern of the sister in the *Thousand and One Nights*: "M. le Marquis, tell us what happened to you when you were ambassador at Constantinople; or the story of the dinner of snuff-boxes." And M. le Marquis begins, in his nasal tones, with his wonted formula of the Châteauneuf who was a rival of Richelieu. Here are the two stories in their entirety.

At the period when M. le Marquis was ambassador at the Porte, he was magnificently doing the honours of the heritage of the Châteauneuf who was Richelieu's rival. But his disinterestedness excited the admiration of the Believers. The Christians of the Holy Land, who, as we know, are all ragged millionaires, obtained the most stupendous services from the French Ambassador. Now the Christians, who are extremely grateful, deliberated as to some means of proving their gratitude. They sent to the Marquis deputies of good family, to offer him a belt

of diamonds. The one belonging to the Regent was not to be compared with it. But M. le Marquis refused the present with a grandeur of soul quite unparalleled.

"Gentlemen," he said to these poor Christians, "you owe me nothing for having done my duty."

"Monseigneur," replied the worthy men, "how can we testify to our gratitude?"

"Very well! Since you insist," he said, "give my secretary, Briancourt . . ."

"Your Excellency's bounty to me is extreme!" cried the secretary, thinking the diamonds already his.

"What may we give him?" asked the deputation.

"The title of Chevalier of the Holy Sepulchre," answered the ambassador, without the slightest intention of poking fun at his faithful retainer.

Now for the dinner of the snuff-boxes. When the Marquis was ambassador at The Hague, a few years before my visit, his inventiveness outvied that of the wily Ulysses. He invited all the wives and daughters of the Dutch ministers to a dinner, where no men were present except himself and his nephew, the Jesuit. The dinner was as gay as might be expected with such a company. The ladies took advantage of their husbands' absence to put themselves quite at their ease. Their heads became so exalted, that at dessert they were talking without heeding one another, and M. le Marquis was listening without speaking. Instead of a centre-piece, a dish of golden snuff-boxes, all of the same weight and workmanship, in number equal to that of the Dutch ladies, was brought up. It was a delicious treat for them. M. de Châteauneuf, rival of Richelieu, had never imagined anything so gallant. The snuff-boxes were compared, exchanged, and the ambassador, taking advantage of the ladies' good humour to make them chatter, plumed himself on having learned all the secrets of State. One of them said to him: "Monseigneur, you are a worthy gentleman"; another naturalised him by dubbing him Van Châteauneuf; this one talked to him of her children; another of her liquor business. In short, the wine went to everyone's head, and M. le Marquis can never remember what follies he said and did. History does not tell how the Jesuit became possessor of a snuff-box which nobody claimed.

To have done with this burlesque family, I will say one word

of the ambassadress, otherwise, Madame la Marquise, a female skeleton, the deplorable wreck of thirty amours, compelled, much against her will, to live on their memory. I began by obtaining her friendship by means of flattery, the consequences of which I happily escaped; but I obtained what I wished—namely, communication of the papers of the Embassy. They do me cruel injustice by attributing to me any other relations with this living skeleton, whom Sourdeval dubbed "the Beast of the Apocalypse." However, it was not a bad female; it took a thousand cares of me from attic to cellar; and has since politely undertaken charge of my purchase of linen and Holland sheets. The daughter of Madame la Marquise has followed, follows, and will follow, her mother's example. Her husband, the Comte de Morangis, allows her two lovers a month, no more. The nephew, Père de Castagnère, a Jesuit, had complete command over the minds both of uncle and aunt. I know few men for whom I have as great detestation; I am certain, however, of judging him without prejudice, when I say that I know no one more Jesuitically a Jesuit, the inward man as hideous as the outward, an insolent lackey, a liar, shameless, and a thief; the rest anon. He played the spy on me so well during my sojourn at The Hague, that I have little doubt he was working on his own account. I do not regret having done him all the harm I could. I should have liked to have sent him to Mississippi on a missionary ship.

Soon afterwards I changed my secretary. Sourdeval was growing deaf, to comply with the conditions of his name; he had in Normandy a wife, and children, whose number increased owing to his absence; his two thousand livres was none too much to feed and clothe the whole family; however, he fed, he clothed them, probably at my expense. Besides that, his laziness irritated me as much as his gentleness. I asked him whether he knew no one in Paris who would be capable of helping him until my embassy was at an end; he replied that one of his friends, Lavergne, who had been in the employment of a banker, would exactly suit me, and offered to write to him. The Abbé de Targny, assistant librarian to the King, had often recommended to me this Lavergne, who had ingratiated himself with the household of the Cardinal de Noailles. I wrote to the Abbé de Targny, to send me the rascal, and by chance kept back the letter which Sourdeval had written to his friend. It was to dissuade him

from entering my service, and that, in terms which decided me to show Master Sourdeval the door. I mind me of the portrait he drew of my person, like enough, though hardly flattering.

"Imagine this sprig of the Church," he said, "his black cloth, and the sword at his side; you will see a devil-may-care face, set in a huge perruque, a wrinkled forehead, a squat nose, curved and threatening eyebrows, beneath which gleam the eyes of a wild boar, a lean countenance all over pimples, a sour and peevish air, and the rest of the man even more unpleasing."

Meanwhile, my treaty of alliance was not progressing; the English ministers left me alone; the States-General remained in a state of inaction; the Grand Pensioner, Heinsius, and the Marquis de Rié frustrated all my plans; my enemies in Paris breathed fire and flame against me. I was assailed with discouragement, and nearly on the point of returning to France. I decided to write to Nocé, Master of the Wardrobe to the Regent, in order that my complaints might be brought indirectly to His Royal Highness. I had not then unmasked that double traitor, who was surreptitiously undermining my credit.

"Monsieur,—At a time when all that one can desire is more nearly within my hands than I could ever have hoped, I am receiving most annoying letters in which I am reproached without rhyme or reason, for a fluctuating policy; and persons without knowledge of the present state of things, relying upon former ideas and old commonplaces, send me orders which derange my whole system; this makes me furious. And his Royal Highness is weak enough to subscribe to all this! This compels me to write to beg him either to revoke his orders or to recall me; indeed, I find it difficult to console myself at being so long absent from you. One ought not to try and argue at such long range, and I assure you they have no notion of what this country is. *Mitte sapientem et nihil dicas.* It takes more trouble to destroy their errors than to commit them to the principal affair, and one has to employ in fruitless dissertations time which might be serviceable. Henceforward, when a foreign mission is successful, I shall look upon it as a miracle surpassing those of St Antony of Padua. There are things of the utmost importance which I dare not write for fear lest they fall into the hands of persons who cannot endure those who are personally attached to the Prince, and who walk straight. This is distressing to

me, for there are means of making him the greatest personage of the day. Help me to combat those envious persons who mislead him, and my gratitude will know no bounds. The women of this country are, like myself, at His Highness's disposal; comely, for the most part, but cold and insipid."

I set down this letter, disfigured though it is by my *ninny* of a secretary; it proves that at this epoch when Nocé was so charitably working against me, I treated him more than ever as a frank and loyal friend.

Heinsius, who had been Grand-Pensioner of Holland for thirty-six years, had given proofs from time immemorial of his aversion for France. He was an upright minister, yet one who preferred the interests of his own hatred to those of his country. I confess that had I been in his place I should have shown no less resentment at an insult done him by Louvois; I have heard him relate it himself,—with an indignation which forty years had not cooled. Heinsius had been sent to France as an ambassador, to assert the rights of King William to the Principality of Orange. Heinsius threw himself upon the rock of Louvois pride; he used to receive foreign ministers like some college rector. A lively altercation ensued between them relative to the town of Orange, which each wished to retain within his frontiers.

"Monsieur," said Heinsius, "by what right do you talk to me with this air of authority? I am the envoy of a free people, which recognises no master."

"Very well!" replied Louvois in a fury; "take yourself off, and buzz no more at me."

"I shall go and tell my fellow-citizens of the reception I have met with from a minister of the King of France."

"Be careful, Monsieur, that I do not shut you up in the Bastille."

Heinsius left the room without replying, and Louvois, in a better frame of mind, restrained his departure by excuses which did not redeem his imprudent speech. Heinsius resembled the peasant of the Danube, as La Fontaine has painted him; to begin with, he had a wolfish look, and seemed always in a bad humour. His gross exterior did not dissuade him from gallantry, which he practised in his manner, and watch in hand, as my courier Maroy said.

Lord Cadogan and Horace Walpole, agents of England, displayed more esteem for me than I deserved. The first talked little, fatigued himself with reverences, ate and drank largely; he even composed a treatise upon French and English cookery. Marlborough, whose disgrace he had shared, in the days of Queen Anne, was the text of most of his remarks. Walpole had not his brother's pride, but neither had he his merit: he was politically timid. I think he has not yet changed. He was so conscious of the superiority of Robert Walpole that he relied incessantly on the latter's example. There was nothing to add when once he had said: "My brother thinks thus." I was, at this time, an assiduous visitor of M. Lassaraz, agent of the Gray Leagues and of Basnage. This Lassaraz was a thorough Dutchman, apathetic, slow of wit and body; for the rest, his heart was open to all comers. Basnage, one of those men of genius lost to France through the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, is far more of a minister of state than of a parish, as also thinks His Royal Highness, who constantly writes to him for his advice. Basnage contributed in no small degree to the ratification of the alliance, and I busied myself in getting the confiscated property he had in France restored to him. Basnage occupied a post with the Grand-Pensioner similar to that of a King's confessor. His counsels were oracles, and in his sermons, imbued with such a pure morality, he ever sought to break down the aversion of the Dutch for the French. I sang his praises in my letters to Massillon: "Basnage," I wrote, "is no more Protestant than Catholic; he is a philosophic foe to superstition, and a friend of the Divinity. Like you, he speaks in such a manner as to win love for the religion of which he is the apostle; he abandons dogma in order to knock at the door of men's hearts. I look upon him as your precursor."

Père de Castagnère followed his vocation, which consisted of thwarting me in whatever I undertook. I went in such fear of this enraged Jesuit, that during my nightly absences I took my secretary with me, to give a diplomatic appearance to my proceedings. Twice a week, at nightfall, I threw round me a mantle of gray camlet, lined with black velvet, and, wearing a large hat, departed to seek relaxation after my daily labours. Ordinarily, the wily Jesuit awaited me at the door and cried to me: "M. Dubois, would you not like a carriage to be got ready

for you?" I went out without answering a word, and, after turning the first corner, sent Lavergne to go where God might lead him. I, on my side, went about my own business, and often did not return to the Hôtel of the Embassy until very late. Muddy, wet, weary, and almost shamefaced, I often had difficulty in effecting an entry, and the porter would cry for an hour on end: "Who is it? Where are you going? What do you want?"

The indefatigable Castagnère always answered for me; he ran up with a light, shouting louder than the porter: "Don't you see it is the Abbé Dubois?" I went to bed dismayed at these turbulent receptions, which gave rise on the morrow to a thousand epigrams.

I have not space to relate all the tricks this devil of a Jesuit paid me. I met him everywhere I went. I had relations of two kinds with Madame Dunoyer, who composed a portion of the *Holland Gazette*. This lady, who was no longer young or pretty or gallant, had abandoned France and her religion in order to have a pretext for leaving her husband, who kept her behind locked bars. Madame Dunoyer had lived by her own industry in England, and lived on that of her two daughters in Holland. She dwelt in the Château of Riswick with these two damsels, who were mighty well trained, as I know from experience. The mother, in the pay of the booksellers, as she had long been in the pay of her lovers, gained her poor livelihood by concocting libels; and I should not have been spared if I had not gilded her pen. Of her two daughters, the elder was under the Dutch domination of a rich and miserly merchant, as they all are on these coasts; the second, who was married last year to M. Winterfeld, in spite of her precious reputation, played the rival prude to her sister. Acting on her mother's advice, she had acted the innocent with such success, that the youthful Arouet came near to wedding her, which would have given her yet another dupe. The publicity the mother gave, I know not wherefore, to the intrigue, procured numerous adorers of this virtue at third or fourth hand. I pass over the nature of the services rendered to me by the girl; but Madame Dunoyer's were more efficacious and less dearly paid. Every three days I sent Lavergne or Duroy to Riswick with notes to be inserted in the *Holland Gazette*. These notes, on the principle that one manages one's own business best oneself, related to my negotia-

tions, and incense floated up to me, burned by my own hands. Maroy, like a lad of intelligence, took advantage of these visits for his pleasures: a courier goes quickly in his amours, especially with a daughter of Madame Dunoyer. Castagnère, who saw the *Holland Gazette* filled with my praises, suspected the motive of the excursions made by Lavergne and Maroy. He promised his uncle to bring him the written proofs of my secret manœuvres, and the Jesuit kept his word. He posted himself one day in ambush on the road Lavergne would have to take, under cover of a little sequestered wood. He had been careful to provide himself with a disguise and a devil's mask. He waited with confidence for Lavergne, who was beguiling his journey with sips from a bottle. He cried to him in a stentorian voice: "Miserable man! if you do not drop the papers you are carrying, I will take you down to Hell."

At these fearful words, the Jesuit shook the foliage and showed himself at a respectful distance. Lavergne, who did not believe in God, was afraid of the Devil, and did not wait to defend his dispatches. Castagnère picked them up with a laugh, whilst my secretary fled without looking back. He returned to me pale and half converted; I fell into such a fit of passion that I threatened to throw him into the Mardick Canal. But I soon learned who the Devil was, and my notes to the *Holland Gazette* were sent to the Regent, who only laughed. Since then I have frequently chanced to call Lavergne "the Devil's cursed secretary."

"Excellent," cried his Highness, when he heard me use this epithet; "at last Dubois is doing justice to himself."

This Lavergne caused me a heap of torment. His greatest offence was when he made an ink-blot, no doubt of malice prepense, on the original of the treaty of alliance. I shed tears of rage. "Ah, Monseigneur," I said to the Regent, showing him this unhappy blot, "it is the only flaw in my embassy. I was in such despair, I came near to flinging myself into the Mardick Canal."

Finally, after all kinds of obstacles, the private convention between France and England, containing the projected alliance to be concluded with Holland, was signed at midnight, on the 28th of November.

"Gentlemen," I said to Cadogan and Walpole, "if I become King of France, I will remember your good offices."

"In the meantime," replied Walpole, "give us your absolution."

The greatest obstacle to the signing had been the title of *Regem Franciae*, which Lord Cadogan insisted on adding in the Latin version of the treaty to that of King of England. This scrupulousness on his part arose from the dread he was in of being impeached by the Parliament on the slightest pretext. Holland was like to escape us, the agents of the Emperor had such a hold over the States-General. Impatient at these interminable delays, the Regent wrote to M. de Châteauneuf to abandon all proceedings if the Dutch Government did not appoint a day to sign. The Maréchal d'Huxelles flattered himself he would exasperate me by giving the initiative of the negotiation, through this letter, to the ordinary ambassador. I answered, on my own authority, that on the 4th of January everything would be signed, and arrived at that result by dint of prayers, ruses, and importunities. His Royal Highness received the news of the event on the same day as a dispatch in which poor M. de Châteauneuf informed him that everything was broken off. Poor M. de Châteauneuf has never forgiven me.

On the 1st of January 1717, at six o'clock in the morning, Lavergne, who was sufficiently clear-sighted to foresee the issue of my negotiation, came to offer me his congratulations and verses in his usual manner, with an emblem representing the ship of France floating at full sail beneath the influence of my star. The legend—*Hoc duce tute!* explained the intention of the author. He began in an emphatic voice to recite me his verses. In them he compared me to Hercules.

"Plague on you," I interrupted him after a time; "your flattery is a little strong for a poor man afflicted with a retention of urine. I would have accepted the eulogy twenty years ago, but to-day I will none of it."

"You hardly understand, Monsieur," said Lavergne, in great confusion.

I drew out my purse with a fine impulse of generosity which, however, gave way to reflection; I deemed it pernicious to encourage a secretary to write bad verses, and I made a feint to be playing with the strings of this tempting purse.

"Hercules!" I repeated, laughing in the nose of my poet,

who was mighty attentive to all my movements and the chink of gold.

"My dear Lavergne," I said at last, "here are six louis . . ."

"A thousand thanks, Monseigneur."

"Take them from me to Madame Dunoyer, who will be coming to compliment me this morning; do not forget it, my friend."

It took him more than a day to recover from his surprise; but he wrote me no more verses.

The final signing took place on Monday, the 4th of January, with the accustomed formalities. My joy was signalised in a thousand follies, and with tears in my eyes I embraced the meanest valets. I was paid a hundredfold for all my perplexities, and I compared myself with Theseus after his victory over the Minotaur. The Emperor was as scandalised at the comparison as I had been with that of Hercules. Truly, this Triple Alliance was no child's play, and I doubt whether any other would have attained his aim. The Regent complimented me in two letters, the one political, the other private. This last is from his own hand.

"My dear Abbé,—You have saved France; the Duc d'Orléans embraces you, the Regent knows not how to recompense you: I have informed the King of the brilliant service you have rendered him; he answered me with the innocence of his years: 'I did not think abbés were so useful.' Make haste to enjoy your triumph, for I feel your absence from the Palais-Royal. You have now to form a long alliance with life and health.

PHILIPPE D'ORLÉANS."

The Maréchal d'Huxelles and my detractors frustrated these noble intentions, and I was sacrificed. Meanwhile, poor M. de Châteauneuf, who was doing the honours of the treaty, gave a splendid dinner to the States of Holland and the agents of England. His kitchen was more skilful than all his diplomacy. Lord Cadogan had the place of honour, the seven deputies of the States-General were at his side, and I facing them, between the Marquis de Châteauneuf and Castagnère. The banquet was merrier than most of that kind; I gave a dash to the conversation, which abounded in agreeable and amusing incidents. These heavy Dutch machines laughed at my expansive gaiety, and Lord Cadogan gorged cheese without cessation. The day after this

festivity I was crushed by a rude and quite unexpected blow. Poor M. de Châteauneuf, who, at the dinner of the night before had regaled us to satiety with the story of Châteauneuf, the rival of Richelieu, received a private order from the Regent to go and negotiate a treaty of friendship and union with the Czar Peter I, who was then in Amsterdam. This was an affront upon me for which I felt aggrieved with His Royal Highness himself; but I have learned since that d'Huxelles and de Torcy had done everything—they were in such fear of my succeeding in this second and easy negotiation—to ensure that poor M. de Châteauneuf, after having had the honour of entertaining the Czar, should sign the treaty with the Comte de Golostin, the Baron de Scaffiroffet, and M. Tolstoy. It is true that the treaty was not signed until the month of the following August, after the negotiation had been drawn up in Paris during the Czar's sojourn. I confess that I did not brook this affront with patience. In the flush of my indignation I wrote with some brutality to His Royal Highness:— .

"Monseigneur,—You know neither what you want nor what you are doing; ought you not to be content with the Triple Alliance, which assures your rights to the succession? Why amuse yourself with old wives' tales and such trifles? What good is the alliance of the Emperor of all the Russias, a rough clod of a carpenter, whose sceptre is a cudgel! Faith! I am overjoyed that poor M. de Châteauneuf was alone charged with this great undertaking; I should have died of shame; I would rather you sent me to China, or to the King of Siam: in any case, I wish for no other recompense than that of having been exempt from this nuisance, etc."

This letter much amused the Prince, who showed it about as a good jest. I felt I had been in the wrong, and I wrote again to His Royal Highness, to the effect that I should pine away like a fish out of water until I was back again at the Palais-Royal. The comparison of the fish out of water, which I had made in no bad intention, was the text for a hundred utterances of satire. People went so far as to name the fish.

However, I gave some days to rest and amusement; I went to Amsterdam with M. Wassenaer of Obdem, and other distinguished persons, to assist at the *fêtes* which were being given in honour of the Czar. I preferred the *rôle* of spectator to that of actor, and

refused to be presented to Peter I, who had asked to see the negotiator of the Triple Alliance. I bought in this town, whose commerce is tea, some porcelain and seven carriage horses. Before I started to return to The Hague, I received for the first time a letter from the King of England, which ran thus :

"You would do well, M. Dubois, to come about the 20th instant to Hellevoat-Sluys, where I pass on my journey to England. Besides the pleasure of seeing you, I propose to deliberate with you on several matters. Stanhope will tell you of the satisfaction I feel at the unanimous consent of the Seven Provinces. If I were Regent of France I would not have you so long a Councillor of State. In England you would be a minister three days hence. GEORGE, KING."

It was with difficulty I restrained my joy under my dignity as a negotiator; I had an access of pride at being in correspondence with a sovereign. I started capering like a madman, my letter in my hand, reading it to all whom I met—my secretaries, my valets, and even to mine host, who did not understand a word of French ; and the letter read, I stood on tip-toe as though to heighten myself, repeating, with an air of pride, "*George, King.*" It was one of the grand days of my life. Stanhope, who had reached The Hague on the 15th, and had not found me, rejoined me at Amsterdam. He came to ask that the private treaty with England, signed on the 28th of November, should be burned as being void; I had not the courage to oppose him, and the holocaust was consummated at dessert after a huge banquet. Thence I repaired to meet *George, King*, whose affability was redoubled. The States of Holland, the foreign ministers, and even Madame Dunoyer and her eternal daughters, came to present their respects to His Britannic Majesty. Madame Dunoyer received a present of fifty guineas; but all the honours were for me. King George kept me for two hours talking of affairs of State, and the esteem he had for my poor merits was even increased. In short, he invited me to come and see him at his palace in London, and I promised to do so. I followed him to sea for some leagues in his yacht, and I think he would gladly have taken me to England.

I did not think definitely of departure until I heard of the mission of Lieutenant-General Dillon, who had been sent to

Avignon to order the Chevalier de Saint-Georges to leave France. The execution of this article of the treaty was its ratification. I took leave of all the persons who had showed their good-will to me, and settled my accounts, which the scoundrelly Castagnère had swollen in order to annoy me. Although I ate at M. de Châteauneuf's table, and was often abroad, I found myself massacred with bills from the apothecary, purveyors, and the devil knows whom. I paid everything, only with certain deductions and erasures, for the sake of peace. But to revenge myself on all this herd and their chief, Père Castagnère, who wished to make a milch cow of me, I determined to give no gratuities anywhere. I took the opportunity when Père Castagnère was surrounded by all his servants to hand him a packet containing a hundred louis, begging him to distribute it amongst his uncle's people. Castagnère, without concerning himself with all the hands which were already extended, hastened to ask the advice of the Marquis de Châteauneuf, who forbade his household to accept anything from me, under penalty of instant dismissal. My packet was returned to me intact. I charged my groom, L'Huillier, to distribute my gratuities and to exact a receipt from everyone, because, said I, you are the sort of man to begin by yourself. L'Huillier could not tempt a simple scullion, as there was question of the terrible receipt, and the packet came back to me just as it had started. I feigned irritation, and made a tour of the ante-chambers, laughing in my sleeve, and saying loud enough to be overheard: "I am indeed unfortunate, that people will not take my money! I have known those who would have gone to the rack but for the sight of its colour; but no, it is a deliberate thing, I must needs leave like a mendicant friar." I summoned Bussière, *valet-de-chambre*, barber to M. de Châteauneuf, who had blooded and clipped me many a time.

"My friend," said I, "you are a Limousin like myself, you would not like to see me dishonoured, take this packet of a hundred louis and tell everybody I do not leave like a knave."

"Ah! Monseigneur," replied the fool, "Heaven forbid! I would as lief the devil as that packet. The ambassador has given us such severe instructions on the matter that one might really think your money brought the plague."

"Plague it!" quoth I, "here are rogues leagued together to be the death of me!"

At these words, uttered fiercely, I threw the packet on the ground; all the louis were scattered about the room, and Buissière made off for fear of succumbing to the temptation of picking them up. I wager the lackeys of M. de Châteauneuf looked upon me as the most generous of men.

After all the farewell embraces, I intrusted Sourdeval with my seven horses and a large chariot filled with merchandise; to Lavergne, my post-chaise, with all the papers of my embassy. The latter set off to await me at Mardick; the other was to accomplish the journey to Paris alone. As for me, I embarked on the States' yacht, which was made ready and decorated to receive me. MM. Basnage and Lassaraz honoured me by accompanying me during the voyage. The vessel left the port amid the thunder of cannon, the sound of drums and trumpets. I was above on the poop during this ovation, and I nearly injured my neck and spine by dint of bowing.

"Monseigneur," said Forceville, naïvely, "one would think these worthy folk were enchanted at your leaving them."

"Idiot," I answered, "do you not see that it is quite the contrary? You ought to be mighty proud to have for master such a man as I."

The yacht sailed all night. I spent it in talking of affairs with Basnage and Lassaraz. About five o'clock in the morning we reached Mardick; artillery and military instruments sounded my welcome. I gave large gratuities to the crew to drink to my health, and the Triple Alliance. Then, embracing my two travelling companions, I handed to each of them a cipher for our correspondence. Wearied by the cares of greatness and the glorious clang of trumpets, I descended at the Sign of the Prince of Orange, where, much to my surprise, I did not find Lavergne with my post-chaise. I swore against this delay, and, in the meantime, lay down for some hours. At dawn, in spite of the rigour of the season, I was at the window, watching through a spy-glass for my secretary's approach. At last my post-chaise arrived, covered with mud and much damaged. Lavergne told me, through his tears, that, having to cross a wooden bridge without a parapet, the carriage had fallen over into a deep ditch, and would have remained in the water if people in the neighbour-

hood had not extricated it with the aid of horses, strong arms, and ropes.

"Wretch," I said, "I shall wait till I am at Paris to curse your clumsiness; I have not time here; see that we start without more delay; I am in a hurry to arrive, alive or dead."

Just as I was stepping into my carriage, a wench from the inn slipped a strip of paper into my hand: "They want to kill you on the road."

Great was my perplexity at this vague and threatening warning. I was tempted not to risk the adventure without an escort; but Lavergne, who entered, changed my intention. He was clothed in a doublet lined with black velvet and ornamented with gold buttons. I was wearing a mantle of grey camlet without ornament. No one would have known the master from the servant.

"Lavergne, my boy," said I, "do me a service, and pass for me."

"What is the use?" he replied; "you are too well known."

"That is what we shall see; do not refuse to gratify this fancy, and I will forgive you with all my heart for wrecking my post-chaise."

This arrangement having been settled between us, I concealed myself in a corner of the carriage with my felt well over my eyes. The road seemed to me eternal, sempiternal; I did not breathe a word, but my ears were keen.

"Monseigneur," said Lavergne, "if anyone had a grudge against you, I should not profit by taking your place."

"Hold your tongue," I said; "don't trouble me, or, if you like, follow me on foot."

My fears were enhanced in the midst of the flats of Antwerp, and each moment I expected to see the assassins. I began to breathe when we halted at a hostelry in Antwerp, for dinner. Some pretty Béguines, who were there, dissipated all my terrors, and emboldened me to resume my own character.

"Monsieur," they said, "we are consecrated to God; do not cause us to sin."

"Do not blame yourselves," said I, "and do not be so cruel; I am ambassador of the Pope, and I will procure you pardon and indulgences from Rome."

"You—the ambassador of the Pope," said one of these doves.

"Without a doubt, my pretty, the Abbé Dubois."

"Ah! Heaven have mercy upon us!"

They fled away with a terror which brought back my own; I did not deem myself so well known.

"Monsieur," said Lavergne, "you want me to pass for you and act the contrary, or so it seems to me."

"To horse and away!"

I did not feel myself in security until Paris was reached. However, I have since pondered on this pretended warning, and I am convinced that it was Maroy's work; he was over-clever at playing tricks on me; or else my enemies had devised this expedient in order to detain me in Holland until they had entirely destroyed my credit for the negotiation of the Triple Alliance. In fact, when I had resumed my ecclesiastical livery, I hastened to the Palais-Royal, where I found His Royal Highness all ice to his "dear Dubois."

"Well, Abbé," he said to me ironically, "so you are returned; you must feel like a fish put back in the water."

"Monseigneur," I asked, "have you been in good health for these four months during which I have been deprived of the pleasure of seeing you?"

"Not altogether; I know not what evil fairy has cast a spell on me and laid me low (*horresco referens!*)."

"*Exorcisco te*, Monseigneur. Why did you not come to Holland?"

"Nothing was any good; and ever since then I have become a hermit. It has cost me a hundred thousand crowns."

"Faith, Monseigneur, you have no idea of economy; I would have had the wench whipped as a reprisal."

It took me no more than two days and four interviews to recover my former influence over the Duc d'Orléans. The Maréchal d'Huxelles had the trouble of his maliciousness for nothing.

When Sourdeval arrived with my baggage, I sent Lavergne with two chests of tea to M. Pecquet, First Clerk of Foreign Affairs, whom I had won over to my interest by little acts of politeness of no importance. Lord Cadogan sent His Royal Highness a present of two small barrels of Tokay wine, with a bag full of pebbles to put in the barrels as they were emptied. It was a precious wine; each bottle was worth at least a hundred livres. I did not wish this magnificent wine to become the prey of the

mistresses, or of Madame, who appropriated all her son's belongings. I persuaded the Prince that the wine would be in less peril in my cellar, and there it is still. I never open a bottle except on occasions of great gala; the Parabères, the Sabrans, the d'Avernes would have long since drunk it to the dregs, if I had let them.

On the 1st of April, His Royal Highness gave me the post of secretary of the King's Cabinet, rendered vacant by the death of M. de Callière, member of the French Academy, who had been plenipotentiary of France at the Congress of Riswick.

I put up with this April-fool's gift, in spite of a lieu of sixty-thousand livres which I was on the point of paying to Callière's heirs; but the Regent exempted me from this in consideration of the services I had rendered to the King in the Triple Alliance. In addition, I obtained a pension equal to that of my predecessor.

"Dubois is a man with a hundred hands," said the voice of jealousy.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE YOUNG KING—HIS PORTRAIT—ANECDOTES OF MADAME GORDON—MASSILLON'S ABSENCE OF MIND—HIS NOMINATION TO THE BISHOPRIC OF CLERMONT—THE VISIT OF THE CZAR — HIS INTERVIEW WITH THE REGENT — HIS VISIT TO MADAME DE MAINTENON—PETER I AND RICHELIEU

I ASSISTED at the transfer of the young King from the hands of women into those of men. The whole Court flocked to the Tuileries; His Royal Highness presented to His Majesty the Maréchal de Villeroi, his governor, and Fleury, his tutor, as well as the other persons who were to be employed in his education and service. The King had been weeping; he was sad and silent; to all the words of the Duc d' Orléans he answered by a motion of his head. The ceremony had not the brilliancy that was expected, and nobody obtained a word from the King except the buffoon Maranzac, to whom he said, with a smile: "Come and play with us on the terrace, and I will give you the order." This order was an oval and enamelled plaque, representing a star and the pavilion of Versailles, beneath which the Royal child used to play with others of his age; he distributed it himself to his favourite playmates. Maranzac went two days later to the rendezvous; but, instead of the order, the King fastened a bunch of leaves in his button-hole with a blue and white riband: these were the colours of the Order of the *Terrace*.

The King's sadness was due to the sudden separation from Madame de Ventadour, who never quitted him, and who, in the morning, had burst into tears and said to him:

"Do not be grieved, Sire; this evening I shall come back."

"It is very long," the child answered; "but you promise me to come back?"

"Be very good whilst I am away."

"How can you expect me to be good when you desert me?"

The King was for several days inconsolable at not seeing her, and the affection he showed gave rise to much comment, especially

when it was noticed that he cared nothing for other women. This Madame de Ventadour is a cunning thing, who, old as she is, has fits of rejuvenescence; she has spent her life in gallantry, and I cannot refrain from the belief that she has given the King bad advice.

"Madame," he would say to Madame de Berri, "you are very pretty this morning, please kiss me."

The King is twelve years old at the time of my writing; he is of amazing beauty; I do not know a more charming child. His large black eyes, with their long curled lashes, have what one might call a fine outlook; his cheeks are the colour of apples; his mouth that of a cherry, and his skin is milky white. His flowing and wavy hair renders his expression more noble and less infantile. He displays his little figure when he walks with quite a royal air; and he knows what respect is better than any grand-master of ceremonies. What is remarkable, however, in a child who is, at least, as egotistical as all children, is that he is affable and polite with everyone, and his fits of naughtiness are not frequent. The Duc d'Orléans is the only person whom he is greatly in awe of, although that Prince affects the greatest respect for him. He is also very proud of his person, and when he can call attention to his pretty feet and hands, he is like a peacock spreading his tail. As for wits, he has quite as much as a king need have, which is mighty little, but accompanied by the necessary amount of assurance to pass off many clumsy jests as wit. Each day the flattering gentry needs a hundred voices to spread abroad the insignificant sallies attributed to the King, with revisions and corrections. Paris and the provinces have revelled in such and such of his *mots*, which are those of Fontenelle or Lamothe. All that is left grand or gracious amongst our grand ladies presses round His Majesty in the hope of being noticed. They would be prepared to train him in no time; but the Regent, who hopes to maintain himself at the head of the Government, devotes all his care to prevent anyone, least of all a woman, from acquiring an empire over the King. Later on we shall look after his education as I did after that of the Duc de Chartres. Already he shows signs of a good disposition, as do all young princes in more or less degree; their birth encourages them to engender desires which they can satisfy. The King forecasts a great love for physical exercise, and skill in

whatever he undertakes. He rides well, dances well, and hunts with indefatigable ardour. He is high-spirited and obstinate in character, and the only spirit he possesses in a very marked degree is the spirit of contradiction. He will be a dangerous King, if he lives long enough. Heaven forbid that I should wish him any ill, poor child! but he has morbid symptoms which make me dread the age of puberty for him. At times his complexion, fresh-coloured as it is, grows dull and livid. He is seized with pains in the bowels which resemble the results of poison; Chirac has told me that he could not answer for his life. In case aught happens him, it is the Duc d'Orléans who will succeed to the throne.

For a long time past, Massillon had been confiding to me his hopes of a bishopric; he looked upon me as one of his most zealous partisans; a number of grand ladies were interesting themselves in his nomination, for the title of bishop gives no little importance to a preacher and confessor. He preached, and preached with that admirable facility we know; and he had Fleury's promise that he should preach the Lenten sermons before the King. I advised him not to pursue two hares at once, if one may be allowed to compare a bishopric with a hare, and persuaded him to devote all his strength to the Lenten course. He had many rivals, who were not his equals in talent, but who were upheld on all sides. Finally, I took him to Madame, who was always our *refugium peccatorum*. Madame, who hated me with such energy, that she would inform me of the fact to my face with ill-sounding epithets, has never refused me anything, so skilful was I in finding her weak side. She was growing old then, and becoming devout; her correspondence consoled her for her domestic troubles, and she was set upon living long enough to bury her inveterate foe, the Maintenon. Massillon was ill recommended by his friendship with me; but his words had an irresistible force in them, and Madame had much esteem for him ever since his funeral oration over Louis XIV.

In the gallery we met old Madame Gordon, great-aunt of Lord Huntly, and lady-of-honour to Madame. Unless I am mistaken, she died the very next day, from a fall she had on the hearth when she thought to sit upon her stool. Her whole life was a series of absent-minded actions, all of them diverting. Madame

used to ask for her coif to go to Court; Gordon would throw in her face whatever she had in her hand; Madame would laugh, and let herself be arrayed in the coif. One day, Gordon seeing the first chambermaid yawning, suddenly spat in her mouth, and that without malice or thought of mischief. Worse still befel her, and her reveries were misconstrued when she thought fit to lie in Monsieur's bed, thinking it to be her own. She was young then, and almost pretty. Madame laughed her heartiest laugh over it. As soon as Gordon perceived us from the chair on which she was seated, stringing pearls, she came straight up to Massillon, and, as she talked, began to undo the buttons of his collar; Massillon, as absent-minded as herself, paid no attention, and I let her alone.

"Madame cannot receive anyone," she said to us.

"On what ground, pray?" I asked. "Is she ill?"

"She was in 1689."

"Indeed! I am delighted that she has had time to recover"; and I changed the subject.

"Madame," cried Massillon, "what are you doing?"

Madame de Gordon's distraction had produced its effect, and Massillon found his toilette becoming, under her hands, by no means tidy. I burst out with a peal of laughter which aroused the worthy woman.

"Pardon me, M. l'Abbé," she said, whilst the latter repaired the disorder caused by her operations; "I am subject to such absence of mind. I took the buttons on your coat for the beads of a rosary."

"Madame," replied Massillon, naïvely, "God will remember your pious intention."

"Imagine, gentlemen," continued the good woman, who was as garrulous as she was absent-minded, "that I hurt myself recently without meaning it; I was abed, and was writing a letter to someone, which I had to seal; I set fire to the wax, and, applying it to my thigh, burned myself so badly that I still bear the marks. Would you like to see them . . .?"

This time Massillon was prompt enough to stop her just as she was preparing to show him her family secrets.

We entered Madame's apartment laughing; she made signs of the cross with her left hand while she wrote.

"Do not interrupt me, gentlemen," she said to us gravely,

going on with her writing; "I am relating a story so infamous, that I pray God to forgive me the scandal of it; 'tis the tempter who has inspired me to spoil my correspondence with it."

I could not reconcile Madame with such superstition; the once strong mind had become weak.

"Madame," I replied, "it is not your Royal Highness who is in the least the cause of our hilarity, but poor Madame de Gordon."

"Indeed," said she, laughing in advance, "some other huge freak; relate it to me, and I will embody it in this letter, which still only runs to ten pages."

I related to her in detail the welcome Madame de Gordon had given to Massillon, who blushed, as he completed the restoration of the decency of his toilette.

"Lord!" cried Madame, when she had finished laughing, "she would have stripped Monsieur to his shirt as innocently as possible. It is not the first time she has attacked the indispensable coverings, think no harm, I vow to you. I remember, in Monsieur's lifetime, in the Salle de Saint-Cloud, she stopped Beuvron, Captain of the Guards, whose height, as you know, was gigantic. Gordon never speaks to a man without playing with the buttons on his coat; but Beuvron was so tall that she could reach no higher than his waist, but little she cared: the conversation proceeded. Beuvron withdrew four paces to pull up his breeches. Gordon only discovered what she had done from the peals of laughter round her."

"Massillon is equally absent-minded," I continued; "he has told me that, having to preach at Sept-Fonds, he mounted into the pulpit, reflected a moment, and came down without having uttered a word, and thought he had finished his sermon."

"Since we are on that subject," said Madame, "I must not omit the story of my aunt, the Princess Elizabeth, Abbess of Hervord. She wanted one day to go to a masked ball, and instead of a mask asked for a chamber-pot, which was brought her. She took it by the handle, saying: 'Where are the ribands to tie it on?' Then, 'Oh, how nasty this mask smells—faugh!' She threw it on the ground, and, at the noise it made, discovered it was her silver night-pot."

These anecdotes had restored Madame's good humour, and I seized the occasion to speak to her of Massillon's pretensions.

She was so full of spiritual affairs, that she could be a useful aid to a seeker after bishoprics.

"My dear Monsieur," she said to Massillon, "you shall have your bishopric, but you must wait till another falls vacant. That of Nantes is promised to M. de Tressan; M. de Caumartin will have that of Vannes; there remain the Abbés de Mornay and de Louvois who are on the list. As for who is to preach in Lent before the King, I love to listen to you too well not to wish you to have the preference before any other. I promise you to look after it; as for the Abbé Dubois, I long ago made him Bishop of Charenton."*

"Coming from the Palais-Royal I should not notice any difference," said I.

"Always insolent, like a lackey of the Church," she retorted.

Massillon thanked Madame for being good enough to take up his part; I united my thanks with his. Two days later Massillon was informed that he was to prepare to preach before His Majesty in the chapel of Versailles every Sunday during Lent. He had already preached his first Advent in presence of Louis XIV, who said to him in a moved voice: "Father, I have heard many great orators in my chapel, I have been greatly pleased with them; in your case, every time I have heard you I have been greatly dissatisfied with myself."

I think I may say that Massillon surpassed himself in what was called his *Little Lent*; it was thus that kings should be spoken to in a bold and noble spirit of truth, expressed in a natural, energetic, and elegant language. I confess that certain remarks seemed directed against myself, and even against His Royal Highness. I reproached Massillon with this, before our common friend, M. Crosat, an enlightened amateur of the arts, who gave us delicious dinners in the midst of his medallions and engravings. Massillon (the preacher in him had disappeared at dessert) bantered me on my scruples, in terms that were scarcely orthodox, and drank two or three toasts to me in Cyprus wine.

"Massillon," said Crosat, "what we like in you is that if your moralising terrifies us, your manner of life reassures us."

The Regent wished to sift the matter; he summoned him and asked him why he treated him as an enemy.

"Monseigneur," answered Massillon, "La Bruyère has been

* The French Bedlam.

exposed to similar interpretations, his noted good faith has destroyed them; I beg you to undertake my defence against anyone who should wrong me by thinking me capable of an evil action."

Whatever Massillon may say, I do not doubt but that he had his secret views. The young King said to him, on going out after hearing him: "Father, I prefer your sermons to the ballet which M. de Villeroi made me dance."

Massillon, his sermon over, stationed himself at the door of the chapel, with lowered eyes, and incense was wafted up to his face. On Passion Sunday, the aged Baron, looking more grotesque than an ape in a perruque, displayed himself in the most prominent place in the chapel, and made grimaces, contortions, and gestures, from the exordium to the peroration of the discourse, which Massillon delivered in gracious and mellow tones. Baron was with another actor, to whom he said aloud: "Friend, this is a real orator, we are only comedians."

He returned on Palm Sunday, and was equally ridiculous; he played the part of amazement, ran forward to the preacher, took hold of his arm, and said, in a patronising tone, "Go on as you are doing, Father; you have a delivery which suits you; leave rules to pupils and the Dancourts."

Massillon amused himself greatly by imitating the mummer's countenance and his dulcet tones. "Withal," he added, "Baron judged me aright; for I remember that Père Latour, of the Oratory, asked me what I thought of the orators most in repute—Fléchier, Mascaron and Bossuet.

"I find a wealth of wit and talent in them," I replied, "but if I ever preach myself, I shall not preach like them."

In short, the Little Lent made Massillon's reputation and his fortune, and in the month of September, whilst I was in England, he was appointed to the Bishopric of Clermont, which the Abbé de Louvois had refused, owing to ill-health.

I wrote to the new bishop: "There needs must be a Heaven and a Hell, a Massillon and a Dubois; I regret I am not in Paris, for I should have obtained a bishopric, that of Besançon to wit, which has been given to the Abbé de Mornay, ambassador to Portugal; have I not been ambassador to Holland? Titles are not lacking me, and, if necessary, I will obtain the support of all the Regent's mistresses. However, I aim higher. I do

not lose sight of the fact that the College de Pompadour, where I completed my studies, has furnished the Church with four bishops and a pope. *Preach, preach until Pentecost*; I will give you rendezvous at the Conclave and elsewhere."

My forecasts have been realised, and although all my preaching is to swear in God's name and the Saints', I have left Massillon far behind me.

For two months the Czar Peter the Great had been expected in Paris; he was in Holland, engaged in unmasking the conspiracy of Goertz, the work of that mad dog Alberoni. The grand apartment of the Louvre had been got ready for His Imperial Majesty, who was travelling to acquire knowledge, and not to receive the homage of all the countries through which he passed. I had seen him in the crowd at Amsterdam; I was pleased to have an opportunity of studying him at first hand. He entered France so suddenly, that we received the news of his departure and arrival almost at the same time. The Maréchal de Tessé was sent to meet him with a large number of nobles, a squadron of the guards, and the King's carriages; but he was not further than Elboeuf when he was joined by the Czar.

"Monsieur," said he, "my fashion of travelling need not astonish you; I often go from Moscow to St Petersburg in four days, and the distance between those cities is at least four hundred leagues."

The Czar was accompanied by the Princes de Kourakin and Dolgorouki, by his Vice-Chancellor, Baron Schaffirof, his ambassador, Tolstoy, and his writing-master, Sotof, whom he used as a jester. There is not one of these illustrious personages but has not since been exiled, imprisoned, disgraced, or beaten with the knout. The Czar arrived at the Louvre in the daytime, but, being pestered with courtiers, poets, valets, and rules of etiquette, he asked for a place of refuge against these persecutions which he had not the right to put an end to with the knout, that habitual sceptre of Muscovite sovereigns. Villeroi, to whom this request was made, proposed his Hôtel de Lesdiguières at the other side of the town. The Czar accepted without any objection, took someone to show him the way, and, stopping up his ears, left the Louvre. He indulged in good cheer at the Hôtel de Lesdiguières, drank largely, went to bed and slept

like a good cit of Paris—that is to say, in great tranquillity. On the following day, the Duc d' Orléans, with the grand officers, went to greet him as soon as he was awake. I had taken the place of honour by the Regent's side.

The Czar Peter had a bearing and countenance as rigid and icy as the climate of his kingdom; he had a colossal frame, admirably proportioned, in spite of its leanness; his face was terrible, with his savage gaze, his piercing eyes, his bushy eyebrows, thick lips, his oiled black locks, and tawny skin. Excessive indulgence in strong liquors had given him a nervous affection, which was perpetually contorting his physiognomy. His movements were abrupt, his carriage haughty, and it was all of a piece. His voice had ever a tone of anger, and the majesty he affected took a savage and uncouth character. I know no man more anxious to learn, or endowed with greater intelligence. It was sufficient for him to see, in order to understand, and I have known him to correct explanations given him by artists and men of science. Wit he possessed, but it was steeped in the snows of his Russia. Bitter, sparing of speech, he only spoke to question, and without too much sacrilege against the French tongue. Of those in his suite, Tolstoy was the only one to express himself in French in a satisfactory manner. The buffoon, Sotof, whose privilege it was to say every conceivable folly to his master, without any fear of the correction of the knout, spoke and understood nothing but Russian. He was a dwarfish old man, with long white hair falling on his shoulders; his hideousness and deformity was insupportable to the eye, and his accent was like the croak of a frog. It seems that his sallies were diverting; for Peter the Great, who assisted at the comedy without a smile, roared when he heard him. In person, the Czar resembled a carpenter more than a great monarch. He was dressed with much simplicity, in brown cloth with gold buttons, without gloves, cuffs, and often without a hat. His officers wore uniforms after their own fancy; some adopted the fashions of Paris, others retained the national costume, with fur within and without.

There was an interchange of compliments between the Czar and His Royal Highness, who affected the superiority of civilisation; the Czar shut himself up in his Muscovite rudeness, and only issued from it after the first commercial and political

overtures. They conferred in low voices, and we removed to a little distance to leave them free. After a conference of a quarter of an hour, the Regent raised his voice, and the circle closed round them again. I did not expect there should be such speedy question of me.

"Monsieur," said the Czar to the Regent, "I have been told that you had a real friend near you, such as I had in the lifetime of my poor Lefort."

"Sire," replied the Regent, "I have no lack of true friends; here are MM. de Nocé, de Noailles, de Saint-Simon, de Canillac. . . ."

"I understand; those are faithful servants, but they are not friends. I speak of the negotiator of the Triple Alliance, the Abbé Dubois."

"Here he is in person, Sire; indeed, I love him as much I can love any man of wit and devotion."

"Sire," said I, in my turn, coming forward with a profound obeisance, "the name of M. Lefort, rendered illustrious by your august friendship, is known to all Europe, and I should never have dared to compare myself with him."

"M. Dubois," replied the Czar, "let envy have its voice; assuredly the friend of a Prince cannot be exempt from certain faults inherent to his condition, but it is still a title noble enough for you to be proud of. I congratulate you on having succeeded in obtaining the treaty of alliance from Holland to the prejudice of the Emperor; I should like to have some men of your stamp in my employ. Kings cannot make great ministers, but ministers make great Kings."

Sotof gave vent to a fit of laughter, followed by a sally in Russian, which made Peter the Great frown. Sotof subsided into a growling silence. I could have thought that the jester had had a scoff at Kings, who are belittled by the surname of *Great.*

The Duchesse de Berri arrived, like the Queen of Sheba, blazing with diamonds. She was flaunting in the centre of her guard, of her marvellously attired ladies, and the gentlemen of the Louvre.

"Is that not Madame d'Orléans?" asked the Czar, doubtless without malice.

"No, Sire; it is my daughter, de Berri," said the Regent, flushing at the insinuation.

The little Duchesse, at the very first interview, indulged in a display of coquetry which certainly kept the Czar in Paris twenty days longer than he had projected to stay. In less than no time, she was on terms of intimacy with his uncouth Majesty, who visited her several times in her palace. They had more than one nocturnal orgy, at which I was prevented from assisting by my retention of urine, and which were honoured by the active presence of His Imperial Majesty. Peter I, among other passions, had one for wine, which compromised his dignity by the most ignoble fits of rage. Nothing has transpired about these bacchanalia of debauchery, in which it was said the Czar grievously insulted the Regent, who so far lost his control as to threaten him with the Bastille. Madame de Berri, who keeps her head even at moments when the wisest lose it, caused the doors to be shut, and let no one leave until they had slept off their cups of the night before. With the day, the actors in this debauch swore a solemn oath never to divulge anything; the Regent, the Czar, and the Duchesse de Berri sealed the reconciliation with an embrace. The oath has been so well kept by all parties that I have never heard any further details on the matter; even the above have so strange an air that they might well be the work of calumny. It is certain, however, that since then the Czar refused to take part in the nights at the Luxembourg.

Two days after the arrival of the Czar, the King went to salute him with all the Royal family. M. de Villeroi, with his stupid care for detail, had arranged the ceremonial; it was a question of giving the King precedence over the Czar; the latter would not hear of it, and when it had been frequently repeated to him that he was to advance towards His Majesty, offer him his hand, and follow in his rear, he shrugged his shoulders and talked in Russian to his buffoon.

The King's visit had been debated in the Council; finally, M. de Villeroi was commissioned to escort him to the Hôtel Lesdiguières, where the Czar would come and receive him at the door. Peter I was informed that the Royal carriage was approaching. He stationed himself, as did all his officers, at the open gate; but, instead of conforming to etiquette, he suddenly caught up the child in his arms and kissed him, saying: "Sire, this shall not be the kiss of Judas." The wits scoffed at this Biblical phrase, which was accompanied by the frankest

caresses. They went up to the apartment, where two seats of like size had been placed; they sat down in them, and the young King showed no uneasiness at the Czar's bearded and severe countenance. Their interview was a protest of reciprocal friendship, and everyone noticed that His Majesty already made play with his personality. The Czar, in the interval which elapsed before his visit to the King, received the Town Corporations, who made speeches to him through the mouths of their respective chiefs. He repaired the same evening to the King, whose whole household was under arms. M. de Villeroi led His Majesty to meet the carriage of Peter I, who caressed him more than he had done on the previous occasion, and addressed these simple words to him:

"Sire, you are commencing your reign, and I am completing mine; I hope you will favour my successor with your friendship?"

"Are you so old already, Sire?" replied the King; "wait until your hair is as white as was my grandfather's."

"Alas! I am much afraid I shall not have the time to complete my work. As for you, Sire, I predict that you will surpass your grandsire in wisdom, glory, and power."

"I hope but cannot believe it."

The Czar dropped the subject, which discouraged his noble ambition; he would often say with sadness: "Unless I live to be a hundred, I shall not succeed in making Russia a flourishing empire."

His visits terminated, the Czar resumed his roving habits of life. He overran Paris in every sense, examining monuments, theatres, manufactures, pictures, and libraries. Dressed like the plainest citizen, followed by one of his officers and by Fontenelle, who had been privileged to please him, he took the first hackney-coach he found, and went in search of information. I much regret that the trouble by which I was then tormented deprived me of the pleasure of accompanying these expeditions of the Czar, whom I look upon as a great Prince, if not as a great man. Fontenelle would gladly have admitted me as a third person. I only met him at the Opera, on the day he visited it with the Duc d'Orléans; he slept through part of the ballet, after having drunk a glass of beer, presented to him by the Regent, standing, with uncovered head. When he awoke, I asked him if the spectacle was tedious to him.

"Quite the contrary," he replied; "but I preferred to sleep, for fear it should become so."

"Have you then, Sire, so much empire over yourself?"

"If I had not over myself, how should I exercise it over others?"

He did not visit the Opera again.

He went from one surprise to another, from enchantment to enchantment. The Duc d'Antin invited him to dinner at his palace in Petitbourg, and, when dessert was on the table, to the sounds of soft harmony, the curtains were raised, and the Czar saw his portrait painted after nature.

"Sire," said Antin, "you leave lasting memories behind you wherever you pass."

He was greatly bored with Madame, who lost all her natural gaiety from having to submit to the yoke of etiquette; did she not want to prove to the Czar that she was distantly related to him? At Sceaux, Peter I was received with such fine flattery in prose, verse, and fireworks that, on leaving, he asked whether the Duc and Duchesse du Maine were comedians. He especially admired the Hôtel Royal des Invalides, whither M. de Villeroi conducted him. Whilst the soldiers were in the refectory, he tasted their soup, and drank a glass of wine, with these words: "Your health, comrades!" He was present at several sittings of the French Academy and the Academy of Sciences, and the eulogy he made of them to Fontenelle, secretary of one of these Academies, may be attributed to Fontenelle alone.

"Monsieur," he said, "when I see the Academies, I changed in no way the opinion you inspired in me of them."

Peter I, knowing all the sciences, was in a position to appreciate all that he saw; he corrected with his own hand a geographical map of his realms; he performed chemical experiments with His Royal Highness, and himself drafted a plan of the Louvre. He did not forget the Gobelins, where he asked explanations of all the processes employed in the manufacture of the noblest tapestry in the world.

"Gentlemen," he said to the workmen, "you also participate in the glory of kings."

At the manufactory of Sèvres, he was offered some magnificent china, which he accepted, saying: "I need some specimens, that I may try and rival them."

He saw medals being struck in the gallery of the Louvre; one of these medals was let fall, as though accidentally; he stooped to pick it up; it was engraved with his effigy, name, and the inscription: *Vires acquirit eundo.* He assisted on several occasions at the sittings of the Parliament, and came away penetrated with respect and admiration for the ministers of justice.

"The laws," said he, "have need of support; respect is only felt for them in proportion to the respect they exact."

The most singular detail of this journey, after the manner of Pythagoras' to the Egyptians, was the Czar's visit to Madame de Maintenon. He spoke of the old lady with astonishment, and, whilst inquiring about her life at Saint-Cyr, let fall more than once the expression of *the Queen*; but he perceived that this title took people by surprise, and refrained from it. Finally, he sent to ask the Maintenon's permission to visit her. She was not likely to say no, and I would not wager that she did not think to profit by the interview. Fagon, a courtier, nearly a century old, showed his old, faded face to Peter the Great, and served as his introducer to the Convent. This Fagon tormented him the whole way with his book: "*The admirable Qualities of Quinine, confirmed by Several Experiences, with the Manner of Employing it in every form of fever, at any age.*"

"I will wager," said the Czar, impatiently, "that your book is not so long as what you have said about it."

They arrived at Saint-Cyr at seven o'clock in the evening. The Maintenon, having washed, and perfumed, and painted herself, went to bed and had all her curtains drawn; the ladies of Saint-Louis remained in the room for the sake of decency. The Czar entered, without speaking a word, drew back the curtains, and sat down by the pillow, considering the old woman, whose toilette made her some score of years younger.

"Are you ill, Madame?" he asked.

"Fagon starves me to death," she answered; "he even refuses me a broth."

"But what is your ailment?"

"My great age."

"That is an ailment for which there is no cure."

He said nothing more; but, as it was dark in the room, he came so close to the Maintenon that she cried: "Your Majesty makes me blush!" She took care to do so. As for the Czar,

he made no answer, but departed suddenly and silently. He never afterwards spoke of the Maintenon.

Before his departure, he went to the Sorbonne, and when he was shown the tomb of Cardinal de Richelieu in the church, he fell on his knees, embraced the statue, and cried: "O great man, why do you not live in my time; I would give you half my domain, if you would but teach me how to govern the other!"

I am sure this fine speech was not said in this form, and it was Fontenelle who took it upon him to revise it. Besides, if the Czar was so intent on having the Cardinal de Richelieu at such a price, I would have sold him to him with all my heart. The Sorbonnists, foxy brothers if any are, imagined they would make use of the Czar's visit in the interest of the Jesuits and the Pope; they drew up a memorial imploring him to reunite the Greek Church with the Roman; Peter I took the petition humbly presented to him by the doctors; nor did he lose his countenance when he handed it on to his fool, contenting himself with saying to him in Russian: "Sotof, this is your affair."

Indeed, a year later, he expelled the Jesuits from his kingdom in order to preserve it, and appointed his jester *Pope*, with a salary of two thousand roubles, to assist him to do honour to a sacred college, composed of fools, and always drunk on brandy. The Sorbonne wished the Czar to pay for the magnificent hospitality he received from the King of France.

Peter I carried few regrets away with him from Paris, but presents worthy of His Majesty; he only refused a sword set with diamonds, doubtless in order that he might not be compelled to give a present of similar value. He was not miserly, but he was poor. His journey cost him no more than sixty thousand livres; 'tis true that he had not to pay a dancing-girl at the Opera. He displayed so much esteem for me that I hesitated as to whether I might not follow him to Russia, where I should have been made Minister on my arrival; but dread of the knout, and my retention of urine, decided me to remain.

CHAPTER XXXII

RUMOURS OF WAR—ALBERONI CRITICISED BY DUBOIS—HIS ORIGINS AND MINISTRY—DUBOIS NOMINATED AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY TO ENGLAND—HIS GRANDSON—THE YOUNG MAN'S PREMATURE END—DUBOIS IN LONDON—DUBOIS' ILLNESS—THE HORSE AND THE MARE—DISPATCHES—DUBOIS' JOURNEY TO PARIS—HIS RETURN TO ENGLAND—ENGLISH POLITENESS—LORD STANHOPE SENT TO FRANCE—SIGNATURES OF THE QUADRUPLE ALLIANCE—DUBOIS' RETURN TO FRANCE

THE treaty of the Triple Alliance was not sufficient to prevent the war which threatened to involve the whole of Europe; the Emperor bore a grudge against England and France, because he had not been included in the treaty; Spain, governed, or rather ravaged, by Alberoni, thought only of revolutions. Philip had declared energetically against the Regent, and there was no doubt but that he would claim his rights to the crown. The Council of Regency was of opinion that the most expedient plan was to have recourse to arms; but I had little difficulty in converting them all to counsels of peace, which was indispensable to the welfare of the kingdom, and especially to the pleasures of the Palais-Royal.

"Wait a little, Dubois," said the Regent, "and we will see if there is any need to launch you once more into diplomacy."

Meanwhile, the knave Alberoni intrigued and agitated and bustled about; he had his organs of intelligence in the very cabinet of His Royal Highness; the Maintenon and the Duc du Maine entered all the more freely into conspiracies from which they hoped to derive immense advantages. Alberoni was not scrupulous as to what instruments he employed for his success.

I have never seen Alberoni, and he is one of the men I should have most desired to know. It is not that I consider him my equal; he is only a parody, a pale copy of me. I have been told that he is a little man, resembling me in face and aspect, cunning, amusing, and wide-awake; the portraits I have seen of him treat him somewhat better; certain engravings give him an impressive

physiognomy. As to his talents, he has several of divers kinds, good and bad; he imitates Satan in evil-doing, and diverts himself with the embarrassments, the vexations, and the misfortunes he causes: did he not consolidate the Inquisition in Spain? His preferred method is to act by raillery, even buffoonery, and I have often noticed that this course is infallible with the great, who like grave affairs gaily treated; he has perspicacity, audacious views; he bristles with cunning and *finesse*; he knows the weak side of men, and the art of making them serve his purposes. He has always done great things by petty means. I see I am speaking of him as though he were still at the head of the ministry, in the King's oratory and the Queen's bed. I ought, on the contrary, to treat him as dead; for, since his shameful fall, his retreat to Rome, and his imprisonment in a Jesuit house, I do not think aught is left him but to write memoirs, or die the death of a repentant Capucin. Moreover, they write to me from Rome, he recks little of kings and governments, and is only interested in the right employment of his vast riches. Doubtless, he expected to be disgraced sooner or later, since all his property was outside Spain. Had I wished, when he passed by the environs of Bordeaux without a passport, on his way to Antibes, I could have had him confined like a second Iron Mask. It would have been an act of justice, but I yielded to my indulgence, for fear of being accused of jealousy and cowardice; besides, one can pardon a defeated enemy.

Alberoni was the son of a gardener of Parma; perhaps he had been a better man if he had remained, like his cousin, cultivating and selling his vegetables! He took orders that he might live at his ease, became a curate, then, after the noble flattery which won him the favour of M. de Vendôme, shrunk from no villany or policy. I speak without prejudice; assuredly, the Cardinal Dubois has no reason to envy the Cardinal Alberoni. He formed an alliance with Campistron, the poet, whom he obliged with his purse; he soon supplanted Campistron as secretary to the Duc de Vendôme; he sold his first master, the Duke of Parma, to that Prince; he sold the Duc de Vendôme to Madame d'Ursins, Madame d'Ursins to the Queen of Spain, and himself to the highest bidder. I confess I am greatly scandalised at being compared with Alberoni, who commenced by licking folks' shoes and making cheese soup, especially as he did not know how to

die minister. He would have to be mighty adroit who would supplant me.

Alberoni was raising troops, building vessels, and preparing a war on the pattern of that of Charles V against Francis I. The Regent decided to unite with England, in order to frustrate these threats of Spain and the Emperor. I proposed to him to extend the treaty of the Triple Alliance to the whole of Europe.

"Peace," said I, "is like a sick man's convalescence; without it he is not cured; he languishes or dies."

Moreover, the vast operations of Law, who had just issued the Mississippi shares, necessitated two years of repose, if the commerce and finances of France were to be re-established. It was resolved that an ambassador extraordinary should be sent to England. I did not proffer myself, but I counted on my antecedents to speak in my favour; then I already knew England and its ministers, with whom I openly corresponded. This was the reason of those suspicions, as infamous as they were absurd, which accused me of receiving, in the capacity of a spy, one or two millions of English gold.

This has been said and written, and many people believe it; Saint-Simon, who spies monsters everywhere, except in his mirror, is no stranger to this covert rumour. Nevertheless, I was chosen amongst them all, and the Regent proved by his conduct that he did not doubt my attachment and fidelity. I did not start till I had taken all my measures.

"Monseigneur," I said to his Royal Highness, "I hope that the Abbé Dubois will return a minister."

"Of what?" he answered absently.

"Not a Protestant minister, be very certain."

I had summoned from Bordeaux, calling him my nephew, the son of that son whom God and the Président de Gourgues had given me; for that dear son had taken a wife before he was of age, and had died, leaving a solitary specimen of my blood. The young man had such bright capacities that I called him to Paris, where he died in 1719 in the flower of his age. He bore my name without attracting notice, and he always called me *uncle*. I had formed great hopes of him, which he promised to realise by his subtle and ready wit, his sound and right judgment, and his amazing activity. He loved me like a father, and made himself my partisan on all occasions. Why did I lose him? He would,

perhaps, have become a minister likewise. It was no apothecary's blood that flowed in his veins; and, just as my brother put me to the blush by his provincial blunders, so did my grandson do me honour by his conduct and talents. He had profited so well by his purse of 120 livres, which I had given him at the college of Saint-Michel, that he had become capable of assisting me in foreign affairs; he was the terror of the clerks, in spite of his mild and insinuating air, his timid manners, and his honeyed voice. He never let an error in a dispatch pass; he verified and examined all so minutely, in my interests, that my serfs of the desk called him the *Regent of the College*. He rendered me important services through the whole course of my negotiation, the burden of which he supported, deciphering letters, making extracts, going from his Royal Highness to M. Pecquet, from Pecquet to the Maréchal d' Huxelles, and keeping me fully informed of all that passed for or against me. But alas! good people do not live long; that is why, perhaps, I am not dead, in spite of my retention of urine and the rest. My poor little Dubois killed himself from overwork; he never went abroad, or moved, or exerted himself, except in fulfilment of his duty. He laughed as much at the notion of being notary, as if he had been the eunuch of a seraglio. He was economical, sober, and mentally equipped for anything. Towards the end of 1718 his health had so cruelly suffered that he was no more than skin and bones; he became a skeleton, lost his appetite, and went to Brives-la-Gaillarde to die, after a month of suffering and treatment. His loss was irreparable to me, and has afflicted me to the point of tears. My grandson had the key to all my domestic affairs. I counted on making a cardinal of him; and, at the time of his succumbing, I was asking the place of my friend M. Pecquet for him in foreign affairs. I should like to see my idiot of a brother of use for anything.

I needed a secretary for my Embassy; the Regent thought to select me for the post an author of some comedies that were scarcely comic. M. de Puysieulx, ambassador of France to the Thirteen Cantons, had asked His Royal Highness for some employment for a humble comedian named Néricault Destouches, who had made his *début* in diplomacy with all the affected coldness of a Protestant minister. This worthy man was foisted on me; I have got on better with him since, at a distance, 'tis true, for I shall leave him in England *in saecula*

saeculorum. Destouches is the gentlest and least venomous of diplomatists. He studies like a Benedictine, meddles with philosophy, and even with what does not concern him; for he is as inquisitive as a woman. I called him "the Curious Impertinent," after the title of one of his pieces. However, he is a poet with a heart better placed than that of most poets—sorry and roving weeds which grow in all soils.

I sent him off in the month of August 1717, after having traced out his line of conduct for him. In the following month my household followed him; and on the 12th of the same month I took the road with the more important portion of the Embassy; my courier, Maroy; Lavergne, my secretary; my *valet-de-chambre*, Manet; and Chef, my cook. As I drew near Calais I met M. d'Yberville, whose recall I had demanded, having been shown by experience how an ambassador extraordinary is harrassed by the ordinary ambassador. M. d'Yberville, who had stayed for several years in England with distinction, yielded his place to me with much politeness, and the advice he gave me did not fall upon a thankless soil. I lodged at Calais with the Chevalier de Molé, commander of the King in that town, where I waited four days for a fair wind and the last orders from His Royal Highness. I chartered a packet to take me to Dover, and embarked there with my people. That day I swore more loudly than all the sailors together, for it was nothing but an uninterrupted series of vexations. Sea-sickness gave me no rest; near a score of times we were like to join the fishes, who would not have received us as brothers. The landing was long, dangerous, and difficult; I lost half my belongings during it. I passed but one night in Dover to appease my fury, and did not stop till I reached London, in the quarter of Westminster, in Duke Street, where a large and handsome house had been taken for me, with a view of St. James's Park, from which it was only separated by a quick-set hedge. I went to bed, on my arrival, after supping; and in the early morning my indignation found vent in oaths when I was awoken by a serenade of trumpets and haut-bois, loud enough to bring all the citizens to their windows. Lavergne came in and informed me that these good people were conforming to the custom in honouring me in their manner.

"The infernal hubbub," I cried; "now they have started singing. Ah, how much sooner I would see them dancing on the gallows."

I paid three guineas to have peace. Lavergne had hands that were grasping enough to withhold at least a third of the money; luck for the musicians that he did not keep it all.

On the morrow, fresh and equipped, I commenced my visits under Stanhope's wing, who took me to His Britannic Majesty, where our acquaintance was renewed with fresh vows of friendship and devotion. I had determined not to be sparing of His Royal Highness's money, but to give brilliancy to my Embassy. I had brought all my silver plate and part of the enamel service of the King; a fine carriage was sent me, equipped with six white horses. At every post I received magnificent provisions of French wine and truffles from Brives-la-Gaillarde, which doubly tickled, by their aroma, my Epicurean senses and my patriotism. These wines, truffles, and other dainties, passed to the tables of King George and his ministers. I did not fail to go and pay my court to the King's mistress, the Duchess of Munster, a prodigious heap of flesh which bore but little likeness to a woman's shape. I adopted a tone of intimacy with her which would have carried me farther than I intended, if I had not respected His Majesty's amours. I was welcomed no less graciously by the Prince and Princess of Wales, who held their Court apart since the Prince had quarrelled with his father on account of the burly Duchess of Munster. I ever preferred to play the part of conciliator, and before my final departure I had had the honour of contributing to a restoration of this domestic intimacy. The persons I took most pleasure in seeing were Horace and Robert Walpole, Lord Cadogan, whom I had known when ambassador in Holland; my Lord Craggs, the favourite minister of George I; my Lord Sunderland, minister and one of the most influential leaders of the Whig party; my Lord Robertson, secretary to the Cabinet; the Baron de Bernstorff and the Comte de Bothman, German ministers, whom the King had nominated in his capacity as Elector of Hanover; Mademoiselle de Schulembourg, *persona grata* with Stanhope, the Countess of Kielmanseak, who had done me the honours of Great Britain on the occasion of my first visit; and, in a word, every woman who was akin to, or the mistress of, a minister. I knew from experience that it was more advantageous to negotiate with English women. This time I did not make use of Manet as interpreter; he would have had to have kept his pencil always in his hand. I employed the

valet of the Portuguese ambassador. He was a fellow of resource, speaking English well, and knowing London like his native town. I know not how he managed it, but he did not leave the household of his Portuguese Excellency unaccompanied. A pretty brunette, a mistress of the ambassador, passed over with him into my service; I have always thought that she was in his own. Be that as it may, she consoled me for the delay in my negotiations. I only received her by night to prevent people from talking, and would often go of evenings to sup with her, leaving my insignia of ambassador extraordinary at her door. When my fair wished to see me, she would come and parade in St. James's Park, passing and repassing, and making little signs in front of the window where I worked. It often happened then that I lost countenance, and my secretary was left gaping, pen in hand, until I had finished my correspondence of looks. But everything passes, even love, which helps to pass the time. I had a coolness for the space of a fortnight, during which my princess was forced to satisfy herself elsewhere. One day when I remembered the brunette enough to visit her, I found her *tête-à-tête* with a huge German officer, who, in his disgust at being disturbed, flung insults at me which I was not slow to return. He threatened me with his sword; me, representative of the King. I sent him to the devil; he bid me go where I would, and I found myself alone with the wench. I confess that my fury knew no bounds; for I attacked her with something rougher than words. She screamed; I redoubled my violence, and while I stormed I fell to my knees on the ground, like a lover making a declaration, but I had to be assisted to my feet, for I had been wounded in the leg. I was carried back to my hotel in a sedan chair, and was put to bed. Stanhope came to see me upon hearing of this, and the story I told of my sciatica, repeated by him to the Court and everybody, brought me visits and tokens of interest from all quarters. King George was not the last to send for news of my sciatica. When I was fit to walk, I reappeared at the Palace, leaning on a crooked cane, and groaning at every step. The King, who received me in his cabinet, inquired after my health, and commanded me to be seated, although he remained standing in order to write.

"Sire," I said to him, "we all have our ailments and indispositions. I feel that I am wasting away drop by drop."

"And I, M. Dubois," he retorted, with a smile, "I have not the power to rid myself of my Jesuits."

It was thus that he designated his piles. This cursed fall came near ruining my head and my health; I no longer had the strength to work and write a letter all in a breath; my presence of mind had quite deserted me, and I had some twinges of genuine gout as a punishment for having feigned it. English physic declared that I was to be thoroughly cleansed out. I had a week of nothing but purgatives. I was always occupied with this or with that, and to employ the time with profit I dictated my correspondence, whilst I was quite otherwise engaged. At one critical moment I commenced a letter thus: "In my present posture, Monseigneur, etc."—"Monseigneur!" said Lavergne; "it is not for His Royal Highness to poke his nose into that." My indisposition yielded to my remedies, and in a short time I felt well enough to mount on horseback. I often went thus to pay my respects to the King, who was living in his pleasure-house at Hampton Court. I took no one with me but my secretary, who dined with the servants. Horse exercise had been prescribed me by my doctors and I exceeded my prescriptions. I had bought a magnificent jennet with harness chased with silver. I paraded him at the Newmarket races. A little accident that befell me put me to more shame than a bad action had done. On a certain race day, splendidly attired in a jacket of violet velvet with ornaments, and a vest of gold stuff, I appeared on my horse in the midst of the ladies and gentlemen. The Duchess of Munster was riding a grey mare, which chance put in front of me; my horse pricked up his ears, neighed, reared, and, before the grooms had ran up, the insolent brute, thinking only of his amours, had overturned the Duchess. I was forgotten in this disaster, whilst succour was brought to the Duchess, who happily proved safe and sound. When attention was drawn to me, or rather to my horse, there was a roar of laughter at the embarrassing position in which I found myself, clinging on to the crupper and in danger of falling every moment; the Duchess herself began to laugh, and the universal merriment was prolonged until my mount was satisfied. In the end—for everything has an end—I recovered my equilibrium, but since then I have promised myself not to run the risk of a similar affront. Fontenelle, to whom I related this odd misadventure, declares that a like thing happened to the monk

Joseph at the siege of La Rochelle; I think one need not be a monk for that; a horse of the King of France would show no more respect.

Meanwhile, the matter of the Quadruple Alliance did not advance. Alberoni seemed in a conspiracy with everyone to oppose it; on my side I did not relax my zeal and efforts to bring it to a successful issue. I wrote dispatch after dispatch to the Council of Regency, to induce it to second my exertions. I carried on a correspondence in cipher with my grandson, whose secret mission it was to keep me informed of all that passed at Court; but as ciphers can often be discovered, I had arranged with His Royal Highness a new method of treating in letters of the gravest affairs: I had given to all the persons, who were in intimate relations with the Regent, strange names of which he had the key. *Saint-Pierre* was the Marquis de Torcy, whose love of peace made him resemble the good Abbé de Saint-Pierre; the *poet** was the Maréchal de Villars, because of his passion for verse; the *stranger to affairs* was the Maréchal d'Huxelles, president of the Council of Foreign Affairs; the *man of the pond in the Tuileries* was the Duc de Noailles, because, grown Cato by the grace of Providence, he fell into the pond in the Tuileries, when fleeing one night from a beauty who had designs on his purse rather than his virtue. This medley of enigmatical names had a singular effect, and in such a fashion I was not afraid of my correspondence being read. I rendered retail to my enemies what they had lent me wholesale, and gave them back a bean for a pea, according to La Fillon's expression. I was working skilfully for the abolition of the Councils of Regency. I still wrote frequently to M. Dubourg, who was in charge of French affairs at Vienna, and to the Marquis de Nancré, captain of His Royal Highness' Guards, who was in Spain for the purpose of inducing Philip V to join the Quadruple Allaincé. It would have been quintuple in such a case, but I had a strong opposition to overcome, even on the part of the Emperor, who was less concerned with the advantages to be derived from the treaty than with his desire to make himself feared. Even in Paris, many people were banded together to frustrate my negotiations; His Royal Highness was justifying the proverb as to the absent being ever

* In the *Private Life of Cardinal Dubois*, it is stated that the *Poet* designated the Maréchal d'Huxelles. [*Editor's Note.*]

in the wrong; and I saw myself being sacrificed to petty politicians, when I asked for leave of absence in order to put my affairs right.

I reached Paris on the 24th of December 1717; I did not give myself time to change my travelling dress, and the Marquis de Noailles having come to fetch me in his carriage, I went to the Palais-Royal, where I met with a poor reception. But when the Chevalier Dubois had become the Abbé Dubois once more, I had little difficulty in warming the old kindness of the Prince, by dint of jests and confidences; I brought him round entirely to my own opinion in what concerned the Quadruple Alliance, and, satisfied with my work, set off again in the hope of being seconded or, at least, of not being thwarted in my plans. I was in London in the early days of January, and gave an account to the King and ministers of the Conferences I had had with the Regent; I showed them the new and plenary powers which had been bestowed on me in a letter from his Royal Highness, couched in the most tender and honourable terms. My credit was enhanced by more than one degree, and the negotiations changed their face to such a point as to satisfy me of their success. Meanwhile I continued to pay my court to the King, and, especially, to the ministers' wives. One does but need to know how to lay out one's money, be one prince of the blood or simple abbé.

I begged the Regent to purchase from La Fillon, who was more celebrated as a costumier than anything else, complete suits and *andriennes*, to be offered to certain ladies who would be of great assistance to me. The fashion of *andriennes*, which date from the first performance of Baron's *Andrienne*, had already gone out in Paris, almost as completely as Dancourt, who had started their idea; but I had no doubt but that the mode would be novel in London. His Royal Highness, who was large in his gifts, sent me more than I had asked for; whole pieces of brocade stuffs, as well as the *andriennes*. They were dresses relieved with cloth of gold and silver with ornaments, the fronts and sleeves garnished with gold filigree work. Some of them were stolen from me, as is customary, but the ladies who had the others would have kissed me for joy. The Duchess of Munster, who would put on her *andrienne* the very same day, looked like the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, she glittered so in the

sun. The good Prince had not forgotten me in his generosity, for the coffer contained for me a coat made of a mosaic of cypress and gold, highly chased with ornaments, and a vest of pearl grey and silver. I was seized with the coquetry of an old woman. I caparisoned myself from head to foot and displayed myself at my window which looked out upon St James's Park. A large crowd soon collected to look at me, and little vagabonds shouted in their English jargon that I was the King of China. They remembered me some days later, for during an excursion I made on the Thames with my Lord Craggs, the populace, which is ever against Frenchmen, thought fit to hoot me and throw mud and stones. Lord Craggs gave orders to arrest this scum; but at that very moment a stone wounded me in the head. I swore vigorously as I saw the blood flow, but for all vengeance they succeeded in arresting a blind man who was whipped in front of the Tower of London. If the stone came from the hand of this poor man it must certainly have struck me by chance.

Meanwhile, my enemies in France had got the upper hand; protestations of devotion had seduced His Royal Highness, who allowed himself to be circumvented, and d'Huxelles brought so many dark manœuvres to bear that he persuaded the Regent a second time not to sign the treaty. My grandson acquainted me with this upset, and I despaired before I was able to come to a determination. Finally, I composed a solemn petition against the Councils of Regency which were opposing my enterprises with this terrible persistence. The petition would have produced a great effect upon his Royal Highness; it finished in these terms, which were frank enough: "With only Dibagnet, porter of the Palais-Royal, with me, and with firmness, your Royal Highness will make himself more respected and feared than with thirty councillors, all known for flatterers and traitors; the Maréchal d'Huxelles by himself would suffice to do more harm to your dominions than war, pestilence, and famine."

In order to divert suspicion I conceived the plan of presenting my petition under cover of the Marquis de Nocé, and I wrote to him in addition, begging him to choose a good moment for showing the Prince my plan of government. Nocé, the rascal, examined it as a preliminary step, and seeing that his friend, d'Huxelles was not spared, he kept it and only gave it back to me on my return, saying that he had not a favourable opportunity

of employing it. I then presented it myself, and did well; the Councils of Regency did not resist my rhetoric. As for Nocé, in testimony of my gratitude, I exiled him for lack of aught better. He is a man whom I love better at a distance. I did not know what to resolve upon in this dilemma; my presence in Paris would have worked marvels, but I did not dare to ask for a second leave of absence; to send Destouches, who was only secretary of the embassy in name, would have led to nothing. At last I thought of Stanhope, who was to set off in the month of July as envoy of His Britannic Majesty. I hoped much from his address and eloquence; as it proved, he had no difficulty in convincing everybody that the Quadruple Alliance was highly advantageous to France. His Royal Highness, who knew him under the best auspices, cemented amid their pleasures an old friendship founded on mutual esteem; the Maréchal d' Huxelles grew quiet. Pecquet was, as usual, in my interest. Stanhope, by dint of solicitations, obtained His Royal Highness' consent to the signature of the treaty. Nothing further stood in the way of this signature, and the King of England no sooner received the news than he had it immediately carried out by Lord Craggs.

I was in a bad humour that day and found fault with everything. I was dictating to my secretary, who had already nearly had the ink-pot at his head for having made me repeat a sentence. I was walking to and fro the length and breadth of my room, my night-cap drawn over my eyes, and muttering to myself.

"Monseigneur," interrupted Lavergne, "do you wish to tell his Royal Highness that he does not know what he is doing?"

"Brute," I replied, "if I have dictated it, it is for you to write it without making observations; besides the Regent does not deserve all the trouble I am taking for him. If I did right, I should hand him back his papers and send him and his government marching."

I had not finished pouring out my bile when Craggs entered, crying: "*Signatum, sigillatumque est!*"*

My joy was delirious, I threw my cap in the air and rushed to embrace the Secretary of State with such vigour that I half choked him.

Stanhope was not long in returning from his mission which had been brought to so fortunate a termination, thanks to the

* The treaty is signed and sealed.

mediation of Pecquet, who had given proof not only of good-will but of capacity. George I, who spared nothing to win him friends everywhere, offered this clerk a diamond that had belonged to Queen Anne, valued at fifteen hundred pistols. Pecquet, alarmed at an object of so much value, refused it, for fear he should be taken for an English spy. I should have had no such scruples. A fig for disinterestedness, 'tis a dupe's trade. I prefaced the final signature of the treaty with *fêtes*, rejoicings, and banquets, at the Regent's expense, all the more liberally as it was a question of doing honour to the King of France. I daresay that Chef contributed in no small measure to the success of my Embassy; this is what made me say that a good cook prepares peace or war amongst his pots and pans. In the course of this grave negotiation, I gave proof of a continence unwonted in me. I had no other mistress than a kinswoman of Lord Craggs, Sarah Bidding; and, indeed, she was more useful to me as a spy upon the Court than in any other capacity. She hoped that I should marry her; but I was careful not to run the risk of bigamy. I contented myself with rewarding her good offices with money, and I succeeded in obtaining from the Regent a secret pension for her, which she still gains on the same conditions. I should, perhaps, have consented to bring her to France, if she had not been smitten with Dubuisson, a French dancing-master established in London, and an agent of Alberoni. I am surprised he has not been hanged. Sarah Bidding was a comely enough person, whom I did not allow to be known, for fear of being suspected with her. The Chevalier Schaub, with whom I was intimate, in spite of his constant indiscretions, said, at a dinner one day, that I had a charming mistress; I was in time to stop him by these words, which gave rise to coarse innuendoes. "I have no other mistress than my secretary, Lavergne, and I cannot dispense with him, for we are always working together." I gave even a worse impression of my piety, by certain jests more Pagan than Christian; above all, by laughing greatly at the impertinence of my people, who, on days of worship, went into a cellar, whose grated sky-light looked upon the door of an Anglican church in the neighbourhood of my hotel, and thence gazed up in the air when the ladies passed with their large hoops. There are devout persons amongst Protestants as well as amongst Catholics, and the devout

Anglicans were much scandalised at my bored and absent countenance in church.

At length the treaty of the Quadruple Alliance was signed on the 2nd of August 1718, at the Secretariate of London. The ceremony was accompanied by all the royal pomp. The princes, bishops, and most distinguished nobles of England had the honour of signing after the plenipotentiaries. I ordered Lavergne to precede me to France and carry the original of the treaty to His Royal Highness, who rewarded him with an order for a thousand crowns. Whilst I was making my arrangements to cross the Straits, I learned with genuine despair of the refusal of Holland to form part of the Quadruple Alliance, the articles of which had no other object than the preservation of the tranquillity of Europe and the observation of the Treaties of Urecht, Baden, and Bâle. They were notified to Philip V, with a threat of war if he did not submit to them within two months. Alberoni did not lose countenance, but busied himself through his ambassador with efforts to break the alliance rather than see the adherence of Spain. His instruments acted at the same time in London, Vienna, Paris, and The Hague. It was on that side they had the best bargain; the treaty assured the Emperor the possession of Sicily, on condition of his renouncing his rights to the Spanish crown. The Marquis de Beretti-Landi, Alberoni's ambassador at The Hague, persuaded the States-General that the aim of the Quadruple Alliance was to impose its laws on the whole of Europe and to take sole possession of its commerce. Commercial motives outweighed all others; the Republic would not accept the conditions of the treaty; but the medal which Beretti-Landi caused to be struck, in memory of this refusal, that was not to be shaken at the time, only consecrated it until the following year. None the less, this check disgusted me with foreign negotiations, and I experienced the less regret in leaving my English friends.

Before my departure I patched it up with Destouches, whom I had to entrust with French affairs. The reconciliation was effected almost without a word, because we both saw our private interest in it. "M. Destouches," said I, "here is no question of comedies; I promise you shall be ambassador, if not in title, at any rate in fact; but I expect you to consult me in everything, and to assist me, if the need arises, to the utmost of your power.

For the rest, you have written a piece called *The Ungrateful Man*, and you will doubtless not fall into the error you have so justly assailed."

Since this period, Destouches has replaced the Chevalier Dubois in England. My comedian, as I call him, owes his fortune to me, and he knows that I have only to withdraw my protection to reduce him to a cipher. He bears a grudge against me, however, for having prevented him from accepting a diamond ring offered to him by George I. I prevented him from receiving it, in order to put him in his place; but my severity did not extend to a purse of five hundred guineas given him in lieu of the ring. After my departure, it was necessary to nominate an ordinary ambassador, and one was nominated; but I delayed the Comte de Sennectère, who was honoured with the title, so long, that he only started for England at the end of the year. This had given me time to instruct Destouches, who conformed in every respect. Every step of the Comte de Sennectère was spied upon, all his words repeated. He soon grew sick of this restraint and demanded his recall, which I granted him with all my heart. It was agreed that Destouches alone should be in charge of the affairs of France in England.

CHAPTER XXXIII

PROGRESS OF LAW'S BANK—COMPANY OF THE OCCIDENT—THE MISSISSIPPI—M. DE CROZAT'S LETTER—FONTENELLE AND LAMOTHE—SUPPRESSION OF THE COUNCILS OF REGENCY—DUBOIS MADE FOREIGN SECRETARY—LORD CRAGG'S LETTER—ABSURD SUSPICIONS

In France, Law's bank was absorbing all men's minds, as it was absorbing all the specie, and I, who at a distance had not had time to be dazzled by the marvels of the Mississippi, was terrified on my return at the abyss into which the Scotchman was dragging us with his paper millions. I acquainted the Regent with my fears, but he reassured me, saying that France was very rich, and that to bleed her a little would do much good to her—"as well as ourselves," he added. Moreover, he repeated to me, we were not yet come to the point whither Law would lead us.

"Do you mean the workhouse, Monseigneur?" I asked. He went on laughing, and advised me paternally to buy shares.

Since the month of April 1717, the bank had been consolidated, to all appearance, by dint of decrees of the Council and edicts of the King. Law founded all the imaginary fortune which he shed over France, upon the edict making the bank depository of all the revenues of His Majesty. The huge detriment these bank notes did to the State notes made it necessary to create twelve hundred thousand livres of revenue to redeem these latter. Law needed an occasion to issue shares, and he founded them on the fogs of the Mississippi. M. Crozat, the father, to whom Louis XIV had made a concession of Louisiana for fifteen years, on condition that he should colonise it, knew not what to do with that country, destitute of commercial resources. He got nothing from it but a few skins, and thought no more of it; for experience had shown him that however rich he was, he was not rich enough to put under cultivation this almost uninhabited portion of the New World. He spoke of it one day in terms of contempt; Law, who was listening, said to him impetuously:

"Sell me your privilege."

"What would you do with it, M. Law?" retorted the honest Crozat.

And he entered at once into circumstantial details as to the position, extent, and productions of Louisiana, details which would have sufficed to disgust any other than Law. He persisted so obstinately that M. Crozat could not prevent him from ruining himself, and made over to him his rights over Louisiana on the most advantageous terms. This cession was approved by the King, who gave Law letters-patent for the formation of a commercial company, called the *Occident*, whose object was the cultivation of French colonies in North America.

Law touched the end he had proposed to himself, in conjunction with the Regent, who did not wish to enrich himself by impoverishing the State. The *Compagnie d' Occident* turned everyone's heads; people dreamt of nothing but millions. The capital of the company consisted of a hundred millions, divided into two hundred thousand shares, each one of which paid a dividend of twenty francs. This dividend was hypothecated on the farming of the registration of shares, on that of tobacco and the posts. On my return, the company was in full vigour; people fought for shares, and there were already fat lords and princes of the Mississippi, for it was a rivalry as to who should buy whole provinces in that distant country, at a price of three thousand livres the square league. Indeed, it was dirt cheap. Law, who had fired every brain with his paper madness, had made imbeciles believe that the value of the paper was invariable, since the sum to be paid was written on the notes, whereas the value of money varied in accordance with the edicts. To convince the incredulous, he gave them examples.

As for me, from the moment of my arrival, I was assailed by Law and the Duc d' Orléans, who wished to interest me in the Mississippi; but Crozat, the son, had spoken of it to me in such piteous terms, that I kept on my guard; I attached no faith to the fine descriptions cried in the streets, and on the hustings, in order to attract the colonists. As it was not possible to see for oneself, I asked my friend Crozat for notes upon this country of abundance, promising him to use the information for myself alone; and, the better to dispose him to an indiscretion, I made him a present of a superb picture of Rembrandt I had brought

from Holland. Crozat replied with the following letter, which I have preserved as a proof that I never bought shares except to speculate with.

"My dear Abbé,—If I thought I were speaking to anyone save yourself, prudence would seal my lips, for I think, in such times as these, it were better to speak ill of God than of the Mississippi. The name comes from a great river, which traverses it, and from which a host of small rivers spring. Louisiana is as large as France, and almost a desert; its climate is mild and damp, and greatly resembles that of England. Plantations would be costly, and yet uncertain; the attempts we have made have not been happy. However, I persist in believing that the vine and wheat would flourish there, and that cattle could be bred. But of what interest could these products be to our commerce? Furs are the only things to be exploited offering advantageous results. Otherwise, all that has been said of the country is false; my father would not have sold it so cheaply if there had been the most insignificant gold or silver mine. Aromatics, precious wood, silkworms are not found. Finally, coffee, sugar, and indigo would not succeed on account of the rains, which last for months on end. I shall have the pleasure of seeing you on the matter and convincing you by word of mouth; it would take too long to do so with the pen. Believe me, your Rembrandt, for which I thank you, seems to me preferable to a hundred square leagues of Mississippi. This bank madness will come to an end, and the Compagnie d'Occident will ruin itself or everybody else.

"Joseph-Antoine Crozat."

This letter, which I did not show to anyone, opened my eyes to the truth; I was not sorry that I had bought no shares except in order to sell at a profit. I may say that I was one of the first to realise the hollowness of the Mississippi bubble, perhaps even before His Royal Highness. Fontenelle and Lamothe, to whom I gave a dinner twice a week, and whom I employed on my correspondence, confessed to me that they were the authors of the superb tales that charlatans delivered in public places and on the hustings to dazzle the laggards.

"Law sought me out," said Fontenelle; "he offered me ten thousand livres to compose him a declamation in praise of Mississippi. I asked him how I was to speak of what I did not know."

"No matter," said he, "you were able to write the *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*, and doubtless you had never visited them."

The reasoning was peremptory, and Fontenelle took up his pen.

Meanwhile the suppression of the Councils of Regency was being schemed at the Palais-Royal, without anything transpiring. At last, when all was ready, the explosion came on the 24th of September. The petty tyrants of the Councils were deposed from the Regency, and their confusion was so great that they hardly dared complain. I had been careful to see that my enemies should find themselves suddenly without employment in the Regency, which they had counted as ruling at their good pleasure and at their least frown. Their hatred of me was redoubled, and I did but laugh at it.

"Monsieur," I said to d'Huxelles, whom I met paying his court at the Palais-Royal, "if the Regent had taken any notice of my advice he could have made something of you; but whenever there is a war on anywhere I will send you to get killed with the best will in the world."

The re-establishment of Secretaries of State made the less disturbance in that I had chosen persons fit for anything, even to the ordering of a big banquet, like the fat d'Armenonville, who had the navy; Maurepas was made Secretary of State for the King's household; Leblanc for war; La Vrillière for internal affairs, and I for foreign affairs. I had chosen for myself what suited me best, and I kept under my thumb all the other Secretaries of State, who were more set on their offices than on the manner of filling them. They were poor heads enough, with the exception of Maurepas, who has too much wit for a minister, or at any rate makes too much show of it. As for finance, d'Argenson, who was controller, without the title, had the chief administration of the ten departments, which were entrusted to MM. Amelot, Pelletier des Forts, Pelletier de La Houssaie, Fagon, Ormesson, Gilbert des Voisins, Gaumont, Baudri, Dodun, and Fourqueux. I had devised this imposing array of names to impress the public, which would have been scandalised if His Royal Highness had touched the finances, the management of which concerned others besides himself. For the rest, these councillors were sorry financiers, except d'Ormesson, who plays

the part of Cincinnatus, despising fortune, and who refused to take any shares in Law's bank. The others are dullards, if not rogues. Fourqueux enriched himself at Bourvalais' expense; Baudri is a Jesuit, whom Linière, Madame's confessor, has thrust into finance; Gaumont and Dodun, creatures of the Parliament, intriguers whom it was necessary to humour; Fagon and Pellitier des Forts have as little heart as soul; Amelot and La Houssaie are imbeciles, who, nevertheless, know what is the interest of a crown lent at five per cent. In brief, in these metamorphoses there was material for causing a revolt amongst the ex-councils of Regency; but Law's millions made too much noise to permit attention to the murmurs of a few interested persons; the conspiracy of Cellamare finished the work of silencing the last complaints of hatred and envy. The Abbé Dubois, become Secretary of State, seemed taller by feet; so much so, that those who used to make a pretence of not seeing me in a crowd, came to salute my Excellency with protestations of devotion which would have made me laugh mightily if I had had the time. My new dignity was celebrated and ridiculed in prose and in verse. I wrote in an emphatic manner to my friends in London, announcing my elevation to them, and amongst several letters of congratulation I received, the following from my Lord Craggs is too flattering for me not to trumpet it abroad:—

"Monsieur,—The King received yesterday the news of your appointment as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He has commanded me to forward you his congratulations, and to tell you that it is the best news he has received since that of the signing of the Quadruple Alliance. Henceforward, he calculates that there will be no one to interrupt the terms of friendship and cordiality upon which he desires to live with Monseigneur the Regent; 'tis from now that I foresee His Royal Highness will triumph over all his foes; 'tis now that I expect to see like interests cultivated in the two kingdoms, so that there will be but one ministry between them. There may well be plenty of noise, but we shall heed it as vessels in a safe haven heed the noise of the wind against the rocks which surround them. Of my private joy, my dear Abbé, I will say nothing, for it is impossible for me to describe all I feel. My kinswoman, Sarah Bidding, is not the only lady who would desire your return here. . . ."

I could think of nothing more interesting than to parade my letter through the rooms and galleries of the Palais-Royal; I read it in a loud and intelligible voice; and I said to His Highness, who shook his head: "You see the high opinion His Britannic Majesty holds of me!"

Saint-Simon, in his obstinacy, said behind my back that this fine letter was equivalent to an authentic proof of treason; people laughed in his face, myself amongst the first. But the sentence *there may well be plenty of noise* excited suspicion in many people. When Alberoni's conspiracy was discovered, it was asserted that my Lord Craggs and I had been previously adverted of what was about to happen. Admirable policy! Dubois the accomplice of Alberoni!

CHAPTER XXXIV

SINISTER WARNINGS—DUBOIS VISITS LA FILLON—THE PARTITION—VISIT TO D'ARGENSON—THE REGENT'S CALMNESS—FIRST MEASURES—JEAN BUVAT—THE REGENT SURROUNDED BY CATS—LETTERS OF M. DE CELLAMARE TO ALBERONI—THE REGENT'S BLINDNESS—THE CONSPIRACY—ARREST OF CELLAMARE—DECLARATION OF WAR WITH SPAIN

On the 20th of November a letter from Basnage threw me into strange perplexity; it informed me that a rumour was current at The Hague, to the effect that Cardinal Alberoni was about to cause a revolution in France. My suspicions, at first, fell upon the Du Maines, but I found nothing to confirm them, in spite of the searching investigations of d'Argenson, to whom I confided my fears. On the 25th of the same month, Stanhope, in a letter which had been delayed on the way, since it bore the date of the 15th, warned me to be on my guard, and to watch over the person of the Regent, there being talk of Spanish projects against France. My anxiety was enhanced, but the Duc d'Orléans, to whom I confided my apprehensions, turned them into ridicule.

"My dear Abbé," he said to me, "what would you think of the state of my reason, if I were to tell you that the sun was on the point of falling and crushing you?"

"Monseigneur," I replied, "I should think you were poking fun at me; but if it was only a question of the fall of this palace, I should commence by leaving it, and not return until after the report of the architects."

"Do you want me to arrest the whole Court, and myself into the bargain?"

"No; but I entreat you not to go abroad of nights for some time to come."

I made this suggestion gloomily; and, disgusted with the ingratitude of princes, went, with the less fear of being assassinated, in that I should be taken for another, to tumble from the clouds

upon La Fillon, who greeted me with reproaches, to which I answered: "Blame no one, my dear, but Madame de Tencin!" This was the mistress of the Abbé de Louvois, who was going to become mine on the death of that gouty priest. She was already so in fact, and the Lord knows what reason I had to remember it!

"Alas, my son," said La Fillon, "what devil of a job have you got that one sees no more of you, night or day?"

"My girl," I answered gloomily, "a Secretary of State belongs to the Government from top to toe."

"Really! It would only want that to ruin me completely; what would become of me, good God! if all the King's people, presidents, councillors, officers, and grandees, abandoned me to the mercy of Heaven? Believe me, Abbé, the Tencin is less virtuous than we are."

La Fillon has the cunningest, gilded tongue that I know. I was so preoccupied with the bad tidings from London and The Hague, that I submitted to be shut up in a small room, and sat down by a partition, wrapped up in a host of notions which transported me far away from the place where I was. A voice of passing sweetness, which fell upon my ear and awoke me with a start, recalled me to the motive of my visit; but another voice, weaker and less distinct, proceeding from the adjoining room, abruptly changed my train of thought. I rose noiselessly from my chair, and, gazing severely at the person who had addressed me first, "Wretched woman," I said, "get into bed if you like, but behave in such a way that I do not perceive your presence, else you will rue it."

She wished to withdraw, but I pushed her roughly into a dark closet, where, with a gesture, I commanded silence. As for me, I returned to the place where chance had led me. When I had entered this blessed room, I had not expected that the part I was to play would be a political one. The partition was thin, and I overheard a part of the conversation which was being carried on on the other side.

"Drunkard," said a woman's voice, "you ought to blush for being in such a condition."

"What would you have?" answered a vinous voice; "I am flesh and blood, and subject to temptation; M. de Cellamare gave me four louis just as a gift."

"What a sum for a knave like you, who can't even read or write!"

"As for penmanship, it is my pride; the money was well earned, for I wrote some fine letters in Spanish."

"Do you understand Spanish, pray?"

"No more than I do Hebrew; but for that, I should not have been employed at the Embassy. There are secrets of State of which everyone ought to be ignorant who does not want to be hanged."

"The devil! It isn't all profit then, knowing these secrets; what is it all about?"

"Go and ask M. Porto-Carrero, who is leaving on the 31st of November for Madrid."

"Who is this Porto-Carrero?"

"Only the Cardinal's nephew, a great lord, with straw in his boots, a smooth tongue, and a purse fat enough to buy the crown and kingdom of the King of France."

"Plague! I should be mighty glad to know the nephew of a Cardinal! And will you be much longer working for the ambassador?"

"Oh no! It will be all finished before the year's end."

The explanation terminated in the inevitable manner, with a silence the interruptions to which were of little interest to me.

The conversation, only a few words of which I lost, was like a flash of light to me, causing me to perceive the depth of the precipice on the edge of which I stood. I had no longer any doubts but that the conspiracy was being concocted under the shadow of the Embassy of Spain. The Abbé de Porto-Carrero had been joined in Paris by M. de Monteléon, son of the Ambassador of Philip V to England. This young man, who was on his way back from The Hague, where he had doubtless laid the mines, was starting for Madrid with Porto-Carrero. I saw in a glance all the springs of this infernal drama; but I had no proofs in my possession. Certainly I could have arrested the man to whom I owed these first clues; but, apart from the fact that his declarations would have thrown little light on the affair, the least noise might lead to the escape of the chief conspirators. I knew enough to be able to lay my counter-mines; I preferred to withdraw without scandal. As a preliminary, I went and released my fair prisoner, who was greatly astonished at the reception I had given her.

"Listen," I said in a low voice, giving her my purse, which she accepted as though she had earned it, "if you do not hold your tongue as to what has passed between us. . . ."

"Nothing has passed, Monseigneur."

"Very well! Not a word on the subject or—Fort-L'Evèque."

I left hurriedly.

"Fillon," I said, on my way out, "tell my neighbour, from me, not to sing so loud."

"Sing!" she replied; "a pretty moment to choose! Of course, my door will be shut to him for the future; an interloping little secretary, a regular public scribe! . . . It is true, I am under certain obligations to him for his penmanship; but your Excellency does not suppose I should hesitate between him and you."

I hastened away from these encomiums for fear of being surprised in such a place. I took a hackney-coach, which conducted me to d'Argenson, at the Convent of La Madeleine de Trainel, where the old sinner had elected to reside. He was with his nuns; but the doors opened to my name, the spouses of Jesus Christ withdrew, and I was left in secret conference with d'Argenson, who was a good adviser when he was fasting. Unfortunately, the remains of a supper compelled me to hide the true motive of my visit; the idea next came to me that the worthy chancellor would be a man to do honour to my discovery, and I confined myself to vague fears, which he treated as old wives' tales. Before all else, I resolved to make the Prince my confidant.

On the morrow, at an early hour, I penetrated into the Regent's sleeping chamber, and this in spite of orders, in spite of valets, and in spite of the fearful cursing which resounded from the depths of the alcove when I opened the door. His Highness sprang from his bed, closed the curtains to conceal his mysterious partner from me, and cried to me in a great passion:

"The devil take you, Abbé; do you think you are at La Fillon's, that you enter without being announced?"

"Monseigneur, an affair of State."

"Good! As if there was not a time for everything! Remember that I am not the Regent until I am out of bed; you are speaking now to the Duc d'Orléans simply."

A little peal of stifled laughter warned me that we were not alone.

"If that be so, Monseigneur, it is to the Duc d'Orléans that I address myself, seeing that his life is in question."

"Why did you not say so at once, without all this preamble! Quick, what must be done? A sword—and we will see what happens."

"Monseigneur, I must speak to you without witnesses."

"Speak on, and have no fear of my betraying myself."

From the manner in which he glanced at the bed, I assumed there was a double sense in his words.

"Very well, Monseigneur, I have discovered a conspiracy of the Prince de Cellamare."

"A conspiracy, Abbé, and why, if you please?"

"I do not know, but an investigation will acquaint us with everything; only, I ask you as a favour to be careful in your actions, you are surrounded with snares and assassins."

"I am mighty well advanced by your revelations. I see neither plots nor danger; your desire to serve me must have made you take windmills for giants."

"I will accept your banter, Monseigneur, on condition that you act with prudence, until I have found the thread which will guide us through this labyrinth."

"We shall see who will be the Minotaur. As for Pasiphäe. . . ."

He escorted me out with the manner of a man who needs his bed, and wished me good-night with as much coolness as if he had said good-morning.

It was the hour of the dispatches; Pecquet, who ordinarily opened them, brought me them all with the seals unbroken; I appreciated this deference, for a Secretary for Foreign Affairs ought not to hand over his correspondence to a clerk, even one with the talents of the estimable Pecquet. I found a letter from Robert Walpole, who begged me, in the name of His Britannic Majesty, to arrest a Spanish banker, who, after having made a fraudulent bankruptcy in London, had fled to Spain by way of France. I had heard speak of this banker, who was to accompany Porto-Carrero; I at once sent orders for his person to be seized. He had started that morning with Porto-Carrero and Monteléon. I had no reason to arrest them; but such was my fear lest Porto-Carrero, or at any rate his papers, might shortly pass out of my reach, that I dispatched couriers, under the pretext of arresting the bankrupt, with orders to seize all the

papers which were in the possession of the travellers. Maroy, whom I had included amongst these agents of justice, was to answer to me for their behaviour; he had arms which I authorised him to employ in case of need. I awaited the issue of this bold stroke with an impatience all the more keen, in that the spies stationed around the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs, where the Spanish Embassy is, had as yet discovered nothing. Cellamare, who followed the joyous example of the Regent, was coming and going on his affairs of gallantry, that was all. I began to accuse myself of imprudence, or, at least, of too much precipitation.

Lavergne entered my closet with so composed and dignified an air, that one would have said he was carrying the Blessed Sacrament. He did not lose countenance at my bad humour, and when I had given him permission to speak, he shut and double-locked all the doors. For a moment, I thought that the rogue, bearing a grudge against me for some rebuff, was desirous of punishing me treacherously; I armed myself with a pen-knife, to be ready for anything, and the opening remark of the imbecile did not tend to reassure me.

"Monseigneur," he said, looking at me fixedly, and coming nearer to me the more I retreated, "what would you give to the man who should save your life?"

"It is according to circumstances; I could hang him just as I could offer him the half of my fortune."

"To be sure, Monseigneur; but if your days were threatened, and someone came to forewarn you."

"Are my days threatened?"

"I do not say that; it is a comparison to attain my end. It is a question of the Regent, and, perhaps, of the King."

"Do you know anything then about the conspiracy?"

"I do not, but one of my friends, for whom I ask your protection; as for me, you shall pay me according to the services I render you."

I questioned Lavergne, in order to discover whether he had any suspicion with regard to the conspiracy; but I recognised that the person who had used him as an intermediary to approach me had made him no confidences. He was a certain Jean Buvat, who lived up to his name by spending at the tavern all that he earned, and sometimes more. He had been a writer

in the Royal Library, but had been dismissed for drunkenness; he worked in the town, and, at the present moment, with M. de Cellamare, with other writers, of whom the man who had given me such valuable information without intending it, was one. This is how he had approached Lavergne, whose acquaintance he had made in the tavern or elsewhere.

He had sought him out that same morning at the Palais-Royal, to borrow some money from him, and he happened to say, with an ejaculation of sorrow, "Ah! how dearly Monseigneur the Regent would buy what I know!" Lavergne, who saw a chance of gain in this, wished to have his part; but Buvat, who was more cunning, wrapped himself in impenetrable mystery, confining himself to the statement that the King's life and that of the Regent were in danger. Lavergne, in order to earn his fee as an intermediary, offered to put him in communication with me, and the writer asked nothing better.

I ordered Lavergne to show him up to my room by the secret staircase, and I closeted myself with him. At any other time I should have cuffed his white, Jesuitical face, but it was necessary to put up with all his slowness.

"I was writer in the Royal Library," he told me; "my modest salary sufficed me; injustice deprived me of my place, and I had to look for work in order to live."

"To the facts, I beg you, my moments are precious."

"A friend suggested to me that I should enter the service of the Spanish Ambassador as a writer; I accepted like a hungry man, and when I was asked if I knew Spanish, I told a lie, and answered that I did not know that language."

(The nuisance! He will try my patience till to-morrow!)

"I am well paid, Monseigneur, I am well fed; but I see things which are directed against the Regency."

"Wretch, why could you not say so sooner?"

"I said to myself: 'If you betray the Ambassador, he will have you beaten to death; if you do not reveal your secret, you will be hanged for an accomplice.'"

"That is admirable reasoning; but, rogue, it is not before me that you have to talk any more about yourself."

"In short, Monseigneur, I have come to throw myself at your knees; I do not remember all that I have seen, but I have written down secretly in the secretariat of the Ambassador,

names, dates, and what seemed to me the most interesting to you. . . ."

"Give them me; give them me! Let me see exactly to what degree you deserve my gratitude. In any case, I promise your reinstatement in the Library."

"Remember, Monseigneur, that I am innocent!"

He was too anxious to make me believe it for me to credit him. I let nothing of this appear, however, and in the notes, which I over-ran greedily, it was easy for me to see that here was no hastily-made translation from the Spanish. I thought I recognised the style of my friend Fontenelle; a little reflection led me to assume that Buvat had doubtless been employed to translate from the French into the Spanish. I always had a talent for distinguishing handwriting, and that of a letter, insignificant enough in itself, seemed to me to be in that of the Abbé Brigaut. This gave me cause to suspect the House of Maine, in which this Abbé played a complacent part. Buvat, however, had suppressed names, forgotten important facts, and doubtless from design, refrained from accusing anyone French; what I saw clearly, was a plot, concocted by Alberoni with the great personages of France, to seize the persons of the Regent and the King, to cast the former into prison and impeach him, and to take the latter into Spain to be brought up under the tutelage of Philip V; as for France, it was to be governed by a Viceroy, who seemed to me, from the manner in which he was designated, to be the Duc du Maine; there was also talk of a convocation of the States-General.

"Bravo!" I cried, striking the table, "I hold the thread of the intrigue; the Abbé Porto-Carrero is perhaps arrested at this very hour."

"M. Porto-Carrero," interrupted Buvat, "I heard it said that he is on his way to Madrid to receive orders."

"Do you know anything more, my friend? Is the conspiracy ready to burst out?"

"Certainly it is; for M. de Cellamare refrained only last night from going in disguise to the Arsenal."

"To the Arsenal? Do not omit the slightest detail."

"For a month past, every night a carriage painted in dark colours, with a coachman who never gets down from his box, has called at one o'clock in the morning to fetch M. de Cellamare,

dressed as a simple citizen. From the place where I sleep I have overheard these words: 'Madame la Duchesse is waiting at the Arsenal.'"

"Madame la Duchesse! You sleep, do you say, in the Ambassador's hôtel?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, above the little gate in the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs. One night when I was retiring to my room without a light, some one tapped me on the shoulder, with these words: 'Pompadour, the Cardinal is asking for you in the oratory of M. de Cellamare.'"

"Thank you, my excellent Buvat; you must now return to the Ambassador and pick up all you can."

"Yes, Monseigneur; but if I am discovered I run the risk."

I halted just in time; it was imprudent to confide to such a wretch State secrets which he could stake on the dice and drown in a bottle of wine. The interest of the Government induced me to form a cruel resolve.

"Idiot," I said, with a laugh; "do you suppose I was not aware of everything before you, and of details with which you are unacquainted? You do not speak to me of the Duc du Maine, nor of the Duchesse du Maine, nor of the Abbé Brigaut, nor of Malézieux, nor of the Cardinal de Polignac, nor of Mademoiselle de Launay?"

"What! Monseigneur, you knew——"

"Can you doubt it now? Therefore, as the little you know is enough to hang a hundred members of the Court, you are going to prison. . . ."

"To prison, Monseigneur! Jean Buvat to go to prison! Is this the reward you promised me?"

"What, wretch! You have deserved the gallows for having conspired with the King's enemies. But I am willing to show you mercy in consideration of your repentance and your good intention; in the meanwhile, for fear you turn traitor, I must make sure of your silence at all costs. . . ."

The poor man was in despair, but a few louis restored his courage, and he submitted to be confined in one of the cellars of my hôtel. I had taken care that the cellar was not full. At bottom, I had a written memorandum on my mind, in which this Buvat said at the time of my embassy to London: "It is not thought in Paris that the Abbé Dubois will succeed in his

negotiations." I reproached him on the subject with "anodine" reproaches, as my brother, the apothecary, would say.

I hastened to the Palais-Royal; the Regent was playing with some kittens which had been sent him by his daughter De Berri.

"Dubois," he said to me, as I entered, "the metamorphosis of the cat and the woman is no fable; look at all these coquettes stroking me with their velvet paws."

"Monseigneur," I cried, "we have blown up the mine, and the Regency is saved!"

"Ah! What is all this litany, my dear scavenger?"

"I have all the proofs in my possession; the Spanish Ambassador, Alberoni, the Duc and the Duchesse du Maine are guilty, and many others as well. It is an execrable conspiracy."

"Once more, my prince of coxcombs, the only conspiracy I see is your own against my peace."

Without replying to this unjust reproach, I presented Buvat's papers, which His Royal Highness took coldly and examined without showing any trace of emotion.

"Well, well! Where are these convincing proofs, pray? I see nothing."

"What! Monseigneur, *oculos habent et non videbunt; aures habent et non audient.*"

"Yes, yes! I see that you are a man without courage, and I expect you to leave me in peace."

"Briefly, Monseigneur, order me to arrest M. de Cellamare. . . ."

"Are you mad, Abbé? Violate people's rights! Truly, to explain this violence of yours, I am tempted to believe he has robbed you of one of your mistresses."

"No, Monseigneur; but he aims at nothing less than at robbing you of the Regency, and, perhaps, of your life."

"A curse on your hallucinations! Listen, Abbé, if you do not discover the least little conspiracy for me, I will have you shut up in a madhouse."

This passed on the 4th of December; a message came to me that Maroy awaited me in my closet.

"Monseigneur," I cried, "here is the occasion to break down your incredulity; I hope to return with the list of all the conspirators."

The Regent returned to his kittens, I to my business, and I heard this blind Prince singing the song of *Le Roi Guillemot* and

La Reine Guillemotte. Such callousness distressed me. I was out of breath when I reached my closet, the door of which I barred.

"Maroy, my son," said I, seeking to read the news he brought me on his face, "what is fresh?"

"Your English bankrupt is arrested, and at Fort L'Evêque, Monseigneur."

"But the Abbé Porto-Carrero? The papers?"

"I will begin with the story of my expedition. I did not catch up the post-chaise until I came to a ford near Poitiers, where it had been upset; my assistants had been left behind, and I had the cunning to mingle with the peasants who had been attracted by the accident. Two lords, whom I recognised as M. Monteléon and the banker, were talking together anxiously; the Abbé Porto-Carrero was extricating the horses and wading knee-deep in the river in his efforts to right the carriage. 'Friends,' he said, in a strong but piteous voice, 'do not desert me; it is my papers—papers of the utmost importance! If I lose them I am lost!'"

"Ah! so he spoke in those terms," said I, rubbing my hands.

"The chaise having been rescued from its predicament, Porto-Carrero made an examination of it which redoubled his despair. 'Holy Virgin,' he said, with a groan, 'the casket has fallen into the river! Fifty doubloons to the man who finds it.' The peasants, all afire at the doubloons of Spain, the value of which was explained to them, entered the water and stirred up the sand, whilst the Abbé wept like a calf."

"And the casket?"

"We were never able to recover it, in spite of all our searching."

"Lost! Wretched knave! And I have been expecting you as a Messiah for this!"

"What about me, Monseigneur, who have perhaps lost with it the fruit of my expedition? To finish my story, seeing my men were coming up, I went straight up to the Abbé Porto-Carrero, and said to him politely:

"Monsieur, I have orders to arrest you."

"Arrest me!" he cried; "and what for?"

"As a bankrupt."

"It is not I," he answered, pointing his finger at his travelling companion, whom I accosted with the same compliment. The

King's people kept these gentlemen quiet. I entered the chaise, which I searched in the places where the Abbé had looked.

"Monsieur," cried he, "by what right do you lay a hand on my papers!" The other two said the same thing in Spanish; I neither heard nor heeded them. At last a cry of despair warned me that I had discovered the treasure, when I had raised a double bottom full of letters and papers; here they are. According to your instructions, I brought back the banker to Paris, after having asked pardon for the great liberty I had taken with the two Spaniards, who will not recover their breath after the fright I gave them until they get to Marseilles."

Whilst he was concluding this story I had already examined a portion of the papers seized, which seemed to me unimportant, and relating to bank affairs. But two fragments of letters addressed to Cardinal Alberoni made me utter a joyous oath; they are those I have had printed and published all over France, with other documents seized from Cellamare. I transcribed them from the originals, which Buvat told me were in the Ambassador's handwriting:—

First Fragment

"I have found it more necessary to employ precaution than dispatch, in the choice of means to convey these papers to your Eminence. Your Eminence will find two different minutes of *manifestos* (quoted Nos. 10 and 20) which our *workmen* have composed, believing that when the time comes to fire the mine, they will serve as preludes to the conflagration. One of these minutes relates to the insistence of the nation, the other discloses the grievances of the kingdom; and on that foundation lays the resolutions of His Catholic Majesty, and the petition which he must make for the convocation of the States. In case we are compelled to resort to extreme *remedies*, your Eminence will do well to examine the writing quoted as No. 30, in which our partizans propose the means they judge fitting, or rather necessary, to avert the misfortunes they see so nearly upon them, and to assure the life of His Most Catholic Majesty and the public tranquillity. Finally, I send in separate sheets, under the No. 45, a *Catalogue* of the names and positions of all the officers who ask for employment. . . . If war and violence force us to put our hands to the work, it must be done before we are weakened by the blows with

which we shall be assailed, and our *workmen* lose courage. If we are obliged to accept a feigned peace, in order to keep alive the fire beneath the embers, we must give it some moderate fuel; and if the Divine mercy were to appease the present jealousies and discontent, it would be sufficient to protect and gratify the principal *chiefs* who are interesting themselves with so much zeal and courage. Whilst awaiting decisive resolutions, I endeavour to retain their good-will and remove all causes which might weaken it."

Second Fragment

"The principal *author* of our designs charged me earnestly, some months ago, to transmit to your Eminence the enclosed letter, and to join to M——'s recommendations the most convincing testimony. I have put off the execution of this commission until I had a safe occasion. I shall at once inform your Eminence that I hear this *subject* spoken of as a person of extreme merit, and that the interest the party takes in what concerns him is great. It has been suggested to me to introduce into His Majesty's service M——, who is a man of quality; and because he has been recommended to me by our *workmen*, I have distinguished him from the general *Catalogue*. These gentlemen have also told me that they can count upon M——; he is the person who was sent here by the Regent to obtain, so they assert, the rough draft of the Catalogue, and they would like to make even more sure of him by obtaining him some gratification or pension.

"With reference to the replies to my propositions of the first of August last, I must point out that the letters of credit required must be in the form of plenary powers with regard to the offers and demands to be made to the Parliament, the body of nobility, and the States-General of this kingdom. These plenary powers can be restricted by the instructions which will be given me for my guidance.

"When the time comes to put the hand to the plough, it will be necessary for His Majesty to write to all the Parliaments, conformably with the letter he has already written to the Parliament of Paris, which has remained in my own custody. In the present state of agitation some mischance might befall His Most Christian Majesty, and I have no instructions how to act; the Duc d'Orléans himself might *make a slip*. In what a state of em-

barrassment should I not find myself, owing to the new form which the Regency might assume, and as to whether it would be proper to facilitate or frustrate its views on behalf of His Majesty?

"M. le Duc de Chartres might pretend to his father's place, and, to surmount the obstacle of his youth, submit himself to a Council, similar to that which the late King constituted by his will. M. de Bourbon might also advance a claim, to the exclusion of the Duc de Chartres, to the absolute authority which M. le Duc d'Orléans now exercises. It befits us to provide for these contingencies, and to choose in advance the course which would be most useful for His Majesty's service; the zealous servants of France are more inclined towards the first than the second."

These letters, highly obscure as they were, indicated a plot formed against the Regency, the Duc d'Orléans, and the King's authority; the writings cited under different numbers pointed to further important papers, which were likely to contain all the details of the conspiracy; they were, doubtless, in that cursed coffer, for the loss of which I have never forgiven Maroy. I suspected the knave of having sold his master to Porto-Carrero, and it seems to me likely that the two fragments seized had been left inadvertently amongst the papers, which were quite irrelevant to the matter in which I was interested. I saw him change colour when I made the discovery of this important testimony. Later, I recalled to mind a fact which pointed to Maroy's treachery. A valet of the Abbé Porto-Carrero rode back at full speed to Paris immediately after the arrest of the banker, and warned Cellamare, who had time to destroy the papers which might have proved his guilt. Meanwhile, I was not at the pains to make a more detailed examination of the portfolios which had been taken from Porto-Carrero. I armed myself with the two terrible letters and flew to the Regent.

"Victory! Monseigneur," I cried, "we are going to convince your incredulity; I hold the conspiracy and the conspirators in my hand."

"Where the devil have you found these rags?" he asked, taking the letters which I presented to him.

"In the Abbé Porto-Carrero's luggage."

"What! Monsieur, you have dared, without my orders and almost without a pretext, to commit such a violation of rights?"

"Read, Monseigneur, and your reproaches will be turned into thanksgivings."

"No matter. Even if it should be a question of a project against my life, you have acted with unpardonable levity."

"Ah, Monseigneur, if you had only read Macchiavelli?"

"Well, well! What is all this lacquey's gossip about?" he asked, after carelessly glancing over the papers I gave him.

"What! Monseigneur, letters to Cardinal Alberoni!"

"If they were letters to the devil, I see nothing reprehensible in them."

"You are right, Monseigneur," I said in a fury; "whatever happens, I wash my hands of it."

I withdrew to my closet, lest I should strike His Royal Highness; I was choking with indignation; I was tempted to throw all the papers into the fire and await events; but I was dissuaded from this by the arrival of Madame de Tencin, who advised me to continue my investigations. I was so disgusted with my attempts to oblige people against their will, that I flung aside the papers of Buvat and Alberoni without a further glance at them. The Duc d'Orléans none the less persisted in his roving life, haunting the streets and places of ill-fame by night, supping and sleeping at the houses of his friends. Finally, news was brought me that there had been a fire at the Spanish Embassy, the cause being the burning of some papers. The unlucky conspiracy came into my mind; I looked again through Porto-Carrero's papers, and found three other scraps of letters which required no comments. A second time I thought I held the serpent by its head and tail. They were three letters in French, written by a practised hand, and destined to be addressed by the King of Spain to the King of France, the Parliament, and the States-General. The unworthy manner in which the Regent was treated left no doubt as to their origin; I recognised the hatred of the Duchesse du Maine. There was, moreover, at the end of the third letter, a "*Petition from the States to His Catholic Majesty*," to induce him to put himself at the head of the Regency. I was reminded of those amorous poets who write both the question and the reply. I thought I saw the hand of the Président de Mesmes in the following letter, in which this statement occurred: "Not only does the Parliament go unheeded in its wisest remonstrances, but the most respect-worthy subjects are excluded from the Councils;

howbeit they represent the truth, they are not listened to; and modesty forbids me to repeat the terms, as shameful as they are insulting, in which they are answered, when they have spoken to the King's officers; the registers of the Parliament will make a record of them for all posterity."

In truth, M. de Mesmes had once come with the red robes, I know not about what, to torment His Royal Highness, who had more need of sleep than of quarrelling.

"Go and be ——," he had said.

"Monseigneur, we will make a record of your Royal Highness' answer."

The Regent laughed in their faces, and let them put on record what they liked.

I remarked one passage in which this worthy De Polignac had laboured for the love of the Duc du Maine: "It appears that the first care of the Duc d'Orléans has ever been to plume himself on his irreligion. This lack of religion has plunged him into licentious excesses the like of which corrupt ages have not seen. This, by drawing upon him the contempt and indignation of the people, leads us to fear at any moment the most terrible punishment of the Divine anger upon the kingdom." In conclusion, there was a number of horrors and calumnies against the Regent and his daughter. Arouet has never written anything so spiteful. This time, I said to myself, if His Royal Highness plays doubting Thomas any further, he ought to be shut up for a madman.

However, I did not venture to acquaint him with my new discoveries; I decided to confide all to Madame, who would know how to act, in default of her son. At the very moment I was on my way to her apartments, I heard Pompadour saying to M. de Laval in the gallery:

"That imbecile of an Abbé Brigaut has taken flight."

"Who knows that he has not compromised us!" replied M. de Laval.

They perceived me and saluted. These words seemed to me a fresh warning from Heaven. I concealed nothing from Madame, who trembled in every limb, crossed herself, and said, in a *De Profundis* voice: "The Maintenon would shrink from no crime!" She read the different documents with fresh signs of the cross: "See," she said; "this man of quality, designated as M——, can be no one but the old woman of Saint-Cyr."

It was thus that her resentment referred everything to the Maintenon, whom she called, in the language of Cellamare's letters, *the chief of the workmen.* We were at the 8th of December, and the Ambassador, secretly forewarned, had had time to make himself as white as snow.

"What is to be done?" asked Madame.

"Arrest M. Cellamare, and seize all his papers."

"That is the wisest course; we shall then get to know all his accomplices."

"In the meantime, Madame, keep His Highness in the Palais-Royal for fear of assassins."

She was in full dress, and I did not accompany her to the Regent. I went to make all my arrangements with d'Argenson and Leblanc. The better to spread my nets, I only spoke of the conspiracy with reticence, and it was decided that, with or without orders, we should proceed the next day to make an investigation of the Spaniard's Hôtel. I assured myself of Brigaut's departure, and sent men in pursuit of him. He was arrested between Nemours and Montargis. He wore a coat and peruke which gave him the look of a merchant; he was riding a horse which was recognised as coming from Cellamare's stables. A *rouleau* of a hundred louis was found in his pocket. He was escorted to the Bastille. At the same time, I wrote to London and The Hague to render an account of my discovery, and informed Stanhope that the Pretender might very well be found to be mixed up in this dark business. I had the Hôtel and proceedings of Cellamare surrounded by spies; and, surprised at receiving no orders, I ventured that night to call upon the Regent.

"Yes, Abbé," said the Prince brusquely, as I entered, "I will have him arrested, imprisoned, and condemned, if possible."

"I am pleased, Monseigneur, to find you in this frame of mind towards a traitor who is protected by the title of Ambassador."

"Towards an insolent fellow who dares to adore my daughter De Valois."

"In that, Monseigneur, I find him excusable, and it is impossible that you should not agree with me."

"That is my affair. To continue: I have seen my mother; I have consulted Nocé and Saint-Simon; I have decided to make sure of the Ambassador."

"Ah! Monseigneur, if you had only spoken so three days ago! None the less, you shall be obeyed to-morrow——"

"To-morrow? Why not to-night? He has written to Mademoiselle de Valois to ask for a rendezvous; suppose he were to profit by this last night . . . !"

"I do not think, Monseigneur, that he has much thought of love-making."

"I will not pardon him for his designs on Valois, as though there were not other women in Paris."

I took advantage of the Regent's good-will to make him write the following few words to M. de Cellamare.

"I beg of Monsieur the Spanish Ambassador, to call upon M. Leblanc about mid-day. M. l'Abbé Dubois will be there, on the matter of a Spanish bankrupt arrested near Poitiers.

"PHILIPPE D' ORLÉANS."

This letter was calculated to remove all Cellamare's suspicions, if he had any. On the following day, musketeers in disguise were posted in the cafés round his Hôtel; others guarded the approaches to the Palais-Royal. I lay in ambush in Leblanc's Hôtel, whither M. de Libois, an ordinary gentleman of His Majesty's, had been summoned to effect the arrest. M. de Cellamare arrived, suspecting nothing. He is a man of short stature, of a swarthy complexion, with black eyes full of Castillian pride; he affects the dandy in his garments, and talks of nothing but his conquests, which have rendered him mighty vain of his person; he speaks French badly, but in a very agreeable voice; he is bristling with spite, and nothing puts him out of countenance. He came towards us smiling, as if to show his white teeth. We rose in silence, and when the door was shut behind him, I removed the key, and called M. de Libois, who was in the adjoining room.

"Gentlemen," said Cellamare, "you seem greatly afraid of being overheard?"

"Monsieur," interrupted Libois, "I bear an order from His Majesty for your arrest. I am to escort you to your Hôtel, where a search will be made by the Secretaries of State requisitioned."

"It would be ungraceful of me," said Cellamare, "to resist His Majesty; but international rights are strangely violated in the person of the Ambassador of Spain. My sovereign will have his revenge."

"Monsieur," I replied, "you will be treated with the respect which is due to your political character; but you are accused of conspiring against the King of France."

"Is it you, M. l'Abbé, who accuse me?"

"No more than I defend you, Monsieur. Moreover, I trust that your innocence will be speedily established."

"So be it! Gentlemen, I am ready to follow you."

"Give your arm to M. l'Ambassadeur, M. de Libois," I cried.

"It is useless," replied the latter; "Monsieur has no wish to escape, because he knows it would be impossible."

The Ambassador's carriage was in the courtyard; we entered it, and a detachment of musketeers in disguise surrounded the carriage, which, with considerable difficulty, made its way through the crowd our coming had collected. The rumour was already abroad that the Spanish Ambassador had been arrested.

M. de Cellamare was, or appeared to be, quite calm; he even conversed of one thing and another with M. Leblanc. Myself, on the contrary, he did not even glance at. We descended at his Hôtel, in the Rue-Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, and, as the crowd was great, M. de Libois offered his arm to Cellamare, who accepted it graciously. The Secretariat was the first point of our investigations.

"M. l'Abbé," said the Ambassador, when he saw me emptying drawers and cupboards, "I hold you responsible for this unprecedented violation."

"As for you, Monsieur, you will be responsible for the conspiracy."

"M. Leblanc," he added, "I look to you to see that no paper belonging to my Government is abstracted."

I had no thought of that! To exempt myself from all responsibility I begged him to summarise everything that had no relation to the conspiracy; he agreed with a good grace, calculating that my researches would only end in my discomfiture. In fact, I found no clue, and I had the Ambassador's papers made into four parcels, which Cellamare sealed with his arms to be sent back to Spain. He was rejoicing under his breath at my disappointment, and Leblanc whispered in my ear: "My dear Abbé, your conspiracy is nothing but a *château en Espagne*."

Cellamare, to enhance my anxiety, took no notice of me, but conversed with M. de Libois.

"Now, gentlemen," I said loudly, "we are going to search the Hôtel from the cellar to the attics."

"You are singularly anxious to render yourself ridiculous," whispered Leblanc.

Cellamare was unable to hide his anger, which he relieved upon a statue; it fell, and was crashed to atoms.

"Sooner that than I," I said coldly.

The perquisition was a thorough one, and lasted more than three hours; I had the floors and wainscoats removed; I was beginning to doubt the existence of the conspiracy myself, when I noticed a mass of the ashes of burnt papers in the hearth. I flung myself on the *débris* which had escaped the flames; one, especially, had been almost entirely preserved; I held the list of the conspirators! Cellamare turned pale and bit his lips.

"Monsieur," he said to me, "His Royal Highness has clever spies!"

I made a feint not to have heard him, and proceeded with my investigations. Leblanc laid his hand upon a casket containing papers.

"Leave that, M. Leblanc," said Cellamare; "they are the love-letters of all my mistresses; they are more in the province of the Abbé Dubois, on account of the trade he has followed all his life."

I had the seals put upon certain papers which appeared to me suspicious, and Cellamare had his Hôtel for a prison, with a guard of musketeers. In the month of January, he was escorted to the Château of Blois, thence to the Spanish frontier, by M. de Libois, accompanied by two captains of cavalry. They respected the Ambassador in him; my feeling is that it would have been a good deed to hang him. At this time, the Duc de Saint-Aignan, our Ambassador at Madrid, received orders to leave within twenty-four hours: Cellamare's arrest was still unknown, otherwise he would have met with less consideration. His offence was that, during the illness of the King, he had said that the testament which left the Regency to the Queen and Alberoni, would very likely be no more respected than that of Louis XIV. Alberoni turned redder than his hat.

After this vigorous measure exercised against Cellamare, further weakness was impossible; I goaded the Regent's good-nature so effectually that the preliminaries for the trial began, and further

arrests were made, until the Duc and Duchesse du Maine were sufficiently compromised to justify us in applying the same measure to them. I was charged with the affair of the conspiracy, and, at the same time, with the course to be pursued as regards Spain. I began by causing four thousand copies of the letters of Cellamare to Cardinal Alberoni to be printed, as well as the other documents seized in the Abbé Porto-Carrero's luggage. These copies were distributed through every province and to all the Parliaments. I took the initiative by sending translations of these letters to all the ambassadors and ministers of Europe, with a preamble and a letter of explanation which that dunderhead Lavergne composed in such a manner as to make me a laughing-stock. The preamble commenced with "As one who," the letter with "In order that." The mockers did not lose the opportunity of dubbing me the Prior *In Order That*, and the Abbé *As One Who.* I was not aware of this remarkable style until the letters had gone. But I took my revenge in my manifesto of rupture with Spain. In the memory of Secretaries of State no declaration of war was ever known to be written so academically. 'Tis true that Fontenelle had dotted the i's for me.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE DUC D'ORLÉANS' OBSTINACY—DESPOTISM OF THE ABBÉ BRIGAUT—PETTY CAUSES OF A LARGE RESULT—ARREST OF THE DUC DU MAINE—D'ANCENIS—THE GALLANT CORRESPONDENCE OF MADAME DU MAINE—LETTER FROM THE CARDINAL DE POLIGNAC—POMPADOUR—THE REGENT IN HIS ORATORY—ARREST OF THE DUC DE RICHELIEU—HIS PORTRAIT—THE GAOLER OF THE IRON MASK—THE REGENT AT THE BASTILLE—THE INSCRIPTION—END OF THE CONSPIRACY

THE conspiracy was flagrant; the Regent still hesitated. To believe him, everyone would have been left in peace, had it not been for Cellamare, who had to be punished for his love of Mademoiselle de Valois, who had nothing to do with the matter. I speak of the time prior to the arrest of the Du Maines. Madame, who saw all the atrocity of the plot, excited her son to severity, and would have liked to cast the Maintenon into a dungeon. I sought out his Royal Highness with all my documentary evidence, fully determined to fill the Bastille with all the malcontents I was aware of. I found the Prince suffering from his eye, his head resting on Mademoiselle de Valois' knees.

"Well, Abbé," said he, "what is your news? Has that insolent Cellamare been punished as he deserved?"

"He will not leave his Hôtel until your good pleasure; I have put the seals on his papers, and I bring you the most important . . ."

"The Spaniards have no suspicions?"

"But you, Monseigneur, doubt everything."

"No; I had him arrested when I learned of his designs upon La Valois. I ought by rights to give him the sole punishment of sending him back to his native land an eunuch."

"Monseigneur, he is not the sole author of the conspiracy."

"The devil take your conspiracy! I neither see nor want to see one; let them conspire at their ease, but don't let them dare to rob me of La Valois."

"What were these people's designs?" asked the latter, in a

nonchalant voice; "M. de Richelieu told me that they did not know themselves."

"It was only a matter," I answered coldly, "of assassinating you, your father, and the whole of the Royal family, excepting the Duc and Duchesse du Maine; of poisoning or imprisoning the King; of assembling the States-General, in order to proclaim Philip V King of France, and the Duc du Maine his Viceroy; of utterly revolutionising the Government. . . ."

"Dubois," interrupted the Regent, with a yawn, "I shall say to you, as they say in the 'Thousand and One Nights,'—Tell me one of those pretty fairy tales that you tell so well—that is to say, of a conspiracy."

"Well, Monseigneur, will you believe your own eyes?"

"My eye, you mean to say, for the left one is quite useless; it gives me a pleasant likeness with my cousin, the Duc de Bourbon!"

"Here is a list of the conspirators in the handwriting of the Prince de Cellamare."

"Ah! show me the paper."

I presented it to him, or rather he snatched it out of my hands, and threw it on the fire.

"Monseigneur! Monseigneur!" I cried, "you are destroying all our proofs."

"I do not wish to know the names of those who hate me; perhaps my conduct will persuade them to remain faithful to me. However, Dubois, I commend your zeal, and command you to follow up the affair, in order to influence people's minds."

"Here I am, thanks to you, in the same position I was in a month ago; even now, if only you would allow me to arrest the Du Maines——"

"Beware lest you do; Madame d'Orléans has begged me not to suspect her brother, and you will answer for him with your head. Otherwise, arrest whom you will—except the Duc du Maine. . . ."

"Except everybody! See, Monseigneur, were I the master, I should begin by arresting you, for you are certainly one of the conspirators against your person and authority."

Meanwhile, I none the less continued with Leblanc and d'Argenson to interrogate all who had been sent to the Bastille. The Abbé Brigaut, my former friend, seduced by promises of

mercy, confessed everything, and to make out his innocence, named a number of the guilty. He mentioned the Duc and Duchesse du Maine as the chiefs of the *workers*. Cellamare had had frequent interviews with them by night, either in Paris, at his hôtel, at the Arsenal, or at the Château of Sceaux. Brigaut even incriminated some Germans, who were high in Madame's favour; and the Duchesse d'Orléans, as well as her sister, the Dowager Madame de Conti, were not exempt from the slur of suspicion. The depositions of this black-frocked devil Brigaut were given with an infinity of evil, and the Regent laughed at them with his girls without attaching or appearing to attach faith in them. Brigaut went on to speak of the amours and gallant adventures of Madame du Maine, who was not over-scrupulous when a face pleased her. He named, amongst many others, the Président de Mesmes and the Cardinal de Polignac. He made such curious revelations on the subject of the latter, asserting that the letters which Madame du Maine had preserved would prove the truth of his statements, that His Royal Highness was not ready to give him the lie; his daughter, De Berri, maintained that the *Dwarf* would not have concealed her game so well; Mademoiselle de Chartres would not believe that a Cardinal could fall in love with a woman; Mademoiselle de Valois pretended that she had heard even more about it from Richelieu. It was necessary, therefore, to obtain possession of Madame du Maine's correspondence. Ruses and entreaties would only have served to put her on her guard against all our efforts; Madame de Berri suggested that the Du Maines should be arrested. This her father found a good joke, and he gave me full powers to act in consequence. I swore under my breath only to give up the love-letters to him, if I should hap upon a second list of conspirators.

I prepared my nets in such a way as to entrap both little and great. In playing the part of inquisitor, I experienced all the pleasure a man feels in avenging himself for injuries undergone in a condition that has long been vulgar. I drew myself up to my full height, in order to make those tremble who had crushed me with the weight of their superiority. The Abbé Brigaut would have had me arrest all Paris, if I had heeded him. I chose the 29th of December for the execution of my vengeance. I flattered myself that the capital *M* in the letters of Cellamare

was to be understood of the Du Maines; the Abbé Brigaut told me that it was the Chevalier du Mesnil. D'Argenson would have it to be M. de Magny, the maddest of all the Councillors of State. By arresting all three of them, I was sure of not making a mistake.

On the 29th, at an early hour in the morning, I sent La Billarderie, lieutenant of the body-guards, to Sceaux, with orders to seize M. du Maine, dead or alive, and to escort him provisionally to the citadel of Dourlens. M. du Maine showed signs of astonishment, which did not surprise me in so false a nature. He was only indignant that his wife did not follow him.

At the same time, I summoned M. d'Ancenis, captain of the body-guards, who used to cut as fine a figure at table or abed as he did at the head of his regiment. He had spent the night in debauchery, as his fatigued air informed me.

"I want you, M. d'Ancenis," said I, "to go and arrest Madame du Maine."

"'Tis a singular coincidence," he answered, laughing. "I supped with her this very night, and the poor lady needs rest, I swear to you."

"She will have it at Dijon, where you are to escort her; but, as she is the woman to resist the King's commands, procure the assistance of two or three captains of the guards."

"All the more readily, as I shall have to keep my countenance before the Duchesse, who is asleep at the present moment."

It was ten o'clock of the morning. D'Ancenis, with three captains of his friends, repaired to the Hôtel in the Rue Saint-Honoré, where Madame du Maine had been residing since the arrest of Cellamare. D'Ancenis drove out the lackeys, and was the first to enter the bedroom.

"My God!" she cried, as she awoke, "why disturb my sleep like this?" Then, recognising her beloved d'Ancenis, "It is you!" she added; "are you made of iron then to return when one is reposing after the pleasures of the night?" She perceived the other officers, and cried out in terror, "Gentlemen, have you come to arrest me?"

"Madame," answered d'Ancenis, respectfully, "I should have wished the King's orders to have been entrusted to anyone rather than me."

"My dear d'Ancenis," she replied, "I will get up; but send these gentlemen away."

D'Ancenis assisted alone at the toilette, which took a long time, for I was waiting in an adjacent room; I was listening at the door lest she should make any attempt to escape.

"D'Ancenis," said she, "give me time to take my jewels with me."

"Willingly," said he; "I have received no order which need prevent you."

I went to intercept the Duchesse, who was asking everybody for news of her husband. I saw her face change at the words I addressed to her:

"Madame, you have no need of precious stones in the place to which you are going."

"Where am I being taken then?" she asked.

"To the Château of Dijon, to your nephew, M. le Duc."

"Bird of ill omen, it is you who have created all this hubbub; but wait till I am Queen of France, and I will have you thrown to the fishes!"

"Madame, I beg you to calm yourself. Those handsome stones will be safer here than at Dijon. There would be enough of them to open thirty of the best guarded prisons."

"There, fiendish Abbé," she cried, throwing them in my face, "there is enough there to pay all your master's strumpets during the whole time of my imprisonment."

I wished her a pleasant journey, and it was a mighty satisfaction to me to know her out of Paris.

Like Nero, I had not taken such a step merely to beat a retreat. That and the following days were marked by a large number of arrests, in accordance with the advice of the Abbé Brigaut. The two sons of the Duc du Maine, the Prince de Dombes and the Comte d'Eu, were banished to Eu, with one of the King's gentlemen to guard them; Mademoiselle du Maine, to Maubuisson; and the *Carissimo Mio* Polignac, seeing that the Councils prohibit the arrest of consecrated Cardinals, was restricted to his Abbey of Anchin, where to kill the time, he wrote verse and prose to the little owl who was a prisoner in Dijon, and refuted Lucretius in the language of the shepherd Corydon. He came near dying of an amorous indigestion. Nor was this all, the Du Maines' people were divided between

the Bastille and Vincennes, with the other agents of Alberoni, Cellamare, the Maintenon, and the villainous hag Des Ursins. A German, Schlieben by name, in the pay of this last, had introduced himself into the household of Madame, who welcomed him on account of his wit and never flagging powers of gossip. He had fled in the public coach; he was recognised, owing to his being minus one arm, and from Lyons was brought back to Paris with all his fellow-travellers; he was only arrested in the courtyard of the Bastille, so that all these poor people thought themselves guilty at least of high treason, without knowing why. There was also another German-Silesian arrested, the brigadier Sandrasky. He was a coarse brute enough, who had married a pretty English woman, and lived on the profits of her beauty. His passion for gambling had induced him to accept money to betray the Duc d'Orléans. In a period of three months, I had more than a hundred persons arrested, which gave rise to a saying that even the King was not sure of his innocence when the Abbé Dubois was at the helm of justice. Nevertheless, I am sure that not one of the chiefs of the *Workers* escaped me.

It was impossible to catch Foucault de Magny, the introducer of ambassadors and an affiliate of the Jesuits. The good fathers secreted him in their houses, where eventually he took the vows. "The only wise thing that mad fellow Magny ever did," said Brigaut to me, "was to escape in time."

Brigaut, against whom there were no proofs beyond his own admissions, said that his papers had been handed to his friend the Chevalier du Mesnil. When the Chevalier was arrested, I asked him to account for the trust which Brigaut had committed to him.

"Monsieur," he answered, without ostentation, "I was convinced that those papers might play him a bad turn, and I burned them on my own initiative."

"You will reflect, Monsieur," I went on, "that you may be accused of complicity."

"It is true; but poor Brigaut will be all the more relieved."

The Regent saw a fine action here; I looked upon Mesnil as a cunning accomplice.

Davisart also was arrested, Advocate-General at the Parliament of Toulouse; Bargetton, an advocate, who had warmly supported

Madame du Maine in the affair of the legitimatisation of the princes; Mademoiselle de Montauban, who had played her part amid the delights of Sceaux, and called herself a maid-of-honour; Mademoiselle de Launay, favourite and friend, an intriguer with a pretty wit, chamber-maid and general hench-woman of Madame du Maine. She did not change in the Bastille, and her interrogation had a singular charm. Sometimes, we forgot, in charming digressions, our character of judges and Secretaries of State. I should have been mighty willing to finish the interrogation *tête-à-tête*. Fontenelle, Chaulieu, and a score of geniuses of the pen recommended her to me. I was careful to give her no reason of complaint; but it seems to me I should have taken a pleasure in seeing her condemned in order to have that of procuring her pardon. In fine, Madame Tencin was jealous of her, and never spoke of her except as my *learned lady*. I had obtained a pretty room for her in the Bastille, where she held her receptions. Madame de Tencin believed I had allowed myself to be seduced; however, Mademoiselle de Launay treated me as Minos; I know not who was ingenious enough to turn the name into Minotaur. 'Tis a hard thing to be a judge of ladies, especially of ladies who have wit.

The Regent was actually desirous of releasing all this company, when he had found what he sought—namely, the amorous correspondence of Madame du Maine and the Cardinal de Polignac! These precious letters, which are in my possession, were discovered in a secret drawer beneath the Duchess's bed. The Regent's daughters no sooner had this collection in their possession than they started to divert the whole Court with them. There were letters from thirty persons; they were read aloud at the reunions in the Palais-Royal, amid a thousand jesting remarks. Some one was malicious enough to send copies of them to the Duc du Maine, to relieve his dulness in his Dourlens prison. The little man had been vain enough to believe that his wife loved him without a rival. He was richly informed to the contrary, and his philosophy was brought up by this sad conjugal truth that marriage is only a step to obtain something else. He swore never to see his beloved wife again; she, on her side, swore to recover her lovers. Whilst he was composing his seven penitential psalms, the replies to the letters found at Madame du Maine's were published. The romance was complete. I

congratulated myself at having had this slap at the cheek of a Cardinal. It is from amongst the papers of Polignac that I garner this harvest of scurrilities against a Prince of the Church. These letters are forgotten now. I will select only one of them, with the reply. His Royal Highness insisted that Cellamare's conspiracy should be limited to a war with Spain, and to these trifles, which now seem to me all the more amusing since the reconciliation of the married couple. Madame du Maine took an oath to her husband that she had never failed in her duties! Here is a love-letter of Polignac's:

"Traitress, the Scriptures say, 'Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing.' Your fair semblance is but a deceit. I have seen and know all. Would God that I was ignorant of it for my sins! Was I wrong in dreading the coming of the Comte d' Albert, who did not fling himself at your feet so promptly as you flung yourself at his head. Abomination! You were at the Opera Ball to meet him and break your troth with me! But Heaven will punish you for your evil thought, for, 'I am the Lord God, the God of vengeance!' That night, will you believe it, ungrateful one, I followed you to that profane ball, masked and disguised like any simple sinner? I saw you without being seen; I know to what a degree the Comte d' Albert loves you, and to what a degree you love him; but I, who have sacrificed everything for you, my fortune, and perhaps the papacy, love you all the more in that you are unworthy. What shall I say to you? I put up even with shame. Just as I was leaving the ball, with despair in my soul, I tore off my mask without reflecting on the imprudence I was committing; I was immediately recognised, and there was but one cry on all sides—doubtless it reached your ears: 'The Cardinal de Polignac in a domino!' I will not paint my confusion; I escaped amidst a shower of hisses, and, none the less, if you were still to love me a little, I would offer this humiliation to God, as a penance for my sins, etc."

This semi-ecclesiastical letter is too long to be transcribed down to the cross upon the forehead, the two shoulders, and the breast. The gallant epistles of the period contained nothing more comical. I am too honest, pen in hand, to recall the entire letter of Madame du Maine; here is her treaty of peace with the Cardinal:

"We are going to-morrow to the country, and M. le Comte d'Albert will not be there, but you only, without your red hat. I will arrange the apartments in such fashion that your room shall be near mine. Try to do as well as you did last time, and you shall give me absolution as well."

In this mass of epistolary rubbish, the following letter from M. de Mesmes in his judicial style especially delighted Madame de Berri, who exclaimed that the laws had to be obeyed.

"Madame, and only love, I beg to inform you that the Parliament desires to hold one of its extraordinary sittings in my Hôtel in Paris. We shall doff our red robes in order to inspire you with less respect and more love. The buffet will be well supplied. "YOUR PRESIDENT."

Meanwhile, the conspiracy, which was to be seconded by thirty thousand soldiers disguised as merchants, smugglers, and monks, coming from Spain and Holland, was treated as a project in the air which had no likelihood of being executed. M. du Maine denied everything, Madame du Maine confessed everything; the others, by dint of speaking both of what they knew and what they did not know, embroiled the affair more and more. D'Argenson and Leblanc were busy with examinations which overlapped and contradicted one another. One might have said it was a fresh plot to increase my embarrassment. I ordered the arrest of Pompadour, who, to avenge himself, would have brought about the arrest of all France. Pompadour, who had married a daughter of the Duc de Noailles, belonged to the household of the Regent through his wife, who was governess to the Duc d'Alençon. He was a petty, tasteless spirit, a busybody, garrulous and self-important. The Abbé Brigaut won him over with four words, and Pompadour, who had nothing but debts, took money from the Des Ursins. He admitted this; but he accused this one and that one, with no other object than to cause vexation to people he detested. After his depositions, I was obliged to arrest M. de Laval, brother of the Duchesse de Roquelaure. "He served as a spy to Cellamare," Pompadour told me; "he had drawn up several schemes for an *Emeute*, and had been at the pains to collate all the letters; at night he would get on his horse and proceed to Sceaux or to the Arsenal." Certainly, Laval is an old rascal who wishes no good to the

Regent, and makes no secret of it; but getting on horseback is not his forte, for he is always ailing and covered with sores from the poorness of his blood; he is not often to be seen without a bandage over his left eye, and his arm is always in a sling; I would be equally loath to answer for the state of his mind.

I came and went; nothing was done; justice lay in a bog, and nobody had clean hands save myself, who had washed them of these delays. I sought out the Regent in his oratory, where he was fond of lying on a cushion made out of the hairs of his mistresses, or passing as such. I think hairs from heads that had known the hangman were not lacking. Still drunk from last night's wine, his complexion was flushed, and his eyes—or rather his eye, for the other was almost always in darkness—flaming. I was gaining in his esteem what I lost in familiar intercourse, because my age, my health and the duties of my office preached virtue to me, and I used to excuse myself as far as I could from the little suppers at the Luxembourg, Anières, and La Muette.

"Well, philosopher!" said the Regent, "how are you governing your anatomy?"

"As well physically as morally, Monseigneur, and the diet works marvellously."

"I know; your diet is Madame de Tencin. Tell me, Abbé, how do you manage always to love the same woman?"

"To that I will answer, How do you contrive to change every day?"

"My friend, I am twenty years younger, and more vigorous as well. Yesterday, by the way, we had our bacchanalia at Berri's."

"Monseigneur, my transformation extends even to my ears, which are grown chaste, and I have lost the trick of swearing, by God!"

"I perceive so. I end where I ought to have commenced. How is your conspiracy proceeding?"

"Faith, Monseigneur, they will hang nobody for another two months!"

"Come now, you are jesting? I do not refuse to prolong the imprisonment of the Duc and Duchesse du Maine, in the hope that they will amend; but I want all to finish by the end of the year in a general pardon."

"As you wish, Monseigneur; it will mean beginning all over again at fresh cost; but, in that case, why wait to empty the prisons?"

"Why? Because I intend to have Richelieu arrested."

"Order his arrest, and I know more than a hundred husbands who will give you thanks."

"I know some lovers too, who will not complain. . . . However, he is no handsomer than I am."

"No; you are Regent, and he is merely Duke; but the women prefer him."

"Alas! Dubois, what are you saying? To be brief, we will be gracious enough to send him to the Bastille as a conspirator."

"So be it."

"We have sufficient proof to deprive him of four heads. I have told him so; but he only laughs, and answers that if every lady he has betrayed were to ask him for one, it would not be too much for all the husbands' heads he has adorned."

"I am mighty pleased to pay some old debts on your account. M. le Duc has whistled away more than three mistresses from me."

"And what about me!"

"To be sure, I remember his name occurred in several depositions from which Mademoiselle de Valois caused it to be erased."

"Yes; we had our reasons for that; but it is said everywhere that this cursed Richelieu is secretly married to Mademoiselle de Charolais."

"Yet marriage is not his forte."

"We are irritated to the last degree, and we shall make use of a letter of Alberoni."

"Beware, Monseigneur, lest you are compelled to cut off one of Richelieu's four heads."

"Imagine it, Abbé, Richelieu promised to deliver Bayonne and Perpignan to the Spaniards, and if we had not kept him in Paris, the treason would have been done, in return for which the little Duc would have become a Prince of Spain."

"Monseigneur, you need not tell me that; I have my reasons for bearing a grudge against my friend, Richelieu, and I should be sorry for him were he to fall into my terrible hands. '*Minos in Hell pale human forms condemns.*'—For *Minos* read Dubois; *Hell* is the Bastille, and the *pale human forms* are our conspirators."

"We will give further orders when Richelieu is imprisoned. . . ."

"In the dungeon of the Iron Mask!"

"Do not speak so, Dubois; you make me shudder."

I divined Richelieu's grievance. I had been at war with him ever since he had robbed me of a certain dancing-girl, not to speak of others. This demon Richelieu was notable in amours; he had always received the first-fruits of gallantry either immediately after or before the husbands. Amongst his thousand *liaisons*, broken off as soon as they were commenced, Mademoiselle de Charolais and Mademoiselle de Valois had shared his hard, selfish, and ill-adjusted heart. I speak without metaphor. Mademoiselle de Charolais was a tigress; Mademoiselle de Valois a fawn. The latter, the darling of her father, who exhausted himself in satisfying all her caprices, loved Richelieu like a young lunatic. I have said that the Regent is singularly jealous in his affections, whether paternal, animal, or amorous. He would fain be the only one to be amiable and beloved. Richelieu introduced himself by night into Mademoiselle de Valois' bedroom, through a door opening into a cupboard, which was certainly not put there for him. He was surprised in one of his rendezvous by His Royal Highness, who gave way to his daughter's solicitations, and yielded his place to the lover. This was carrying a father's complacence somewhat far. However, he took umbrage at this intercourse, which he seemed to favour by permitting; and, to remove Richelieu, he appointed him to a mission abroad. Mademoiselle de Valois was so earnest in her entreaties, that Richelieu postponed his departure. The conspiracy of the Prince de Cellamare intervened. Richelieu, risking everything, retired to one of his estates, whither Mademoiselle de Charolais went to seek him. I will not dare assert whether or not he married her, but he would have committed bigamy as cheerfully as aught else; for one day, when they were playing Molière's *Festin de Pierre*, he said, without beating about the bush, "'Tis a fine character—that of Don Juan."

At last Mademoiselle de Valois, in despair at these rumours of marriage, which Richelieu denied with the air of a man who does not want to be believed, threw herself into her father's arms, to obtain reparation of the outrage her lover was putting upon her. It was with a quite natural eagerness that the Regent put Vincennes and the Bastille at his daughter's disposition. The *lettre-de-cachet* was sent that same day to his address; but it

was no fault of Mademoiselle de Valois if the fugitive did not escape the punishment which she had herself solicited. With the remorse of a woman in love she warned the Duke to fly, until she had procured the revocation of the fatal *lettre-de-cachet.* But Richelieu played the magnanimous—the offended lover; and to relieve himself, perhaps to avoid unfavourable presumptions, refused to fly. He even ordered his people to make ready his luggage as a prisoner—love-letters, locks of hair, and ladies' portraits. The police-officer arrived, thinking to surprise him, but was greatly surprised himself to be accosted in these terms: "Good-day, Monsieur; I was expecting you." I had given orders for the seizure of all the Duc's papers; but instead of politics I found nought but love. A portion of his letters were burnt by the Regent's hands; the rest were returned to him, and he made curl-papers of them, saying, "Now my collection is incomplete, I want to begin again." He had caused his mistresses to be painted in all sorts of monastic garments, and licentious devices, by the Abbé Grécourt, explained these fine pictures. I remember that Mademoiselle de Charolais wore the costume of Saint Frances, Mademoiselle de Valois that of Saint Theresa; the Maréchale de Villars was painted as a Capuchin, Madame d'Estrées as a Collatine. He spoke of them to me sometimes. "I have my saints and martyrs," he would say, laughing; "they are all that; but, as for virgins, there are none outside Paradise."

The Duc de Richelieu was not more than twenty-four years of age, with a girlish face; he was at that period what he is to-day, with the addition of four years and a beard. One might say of his figure, as of the Sunamite, that it has the elegance of a palm-tree; it is straight and flexible, with an infinity of grace in all its movements. I know a lady who became infatuated with him merely from having seen a back view of him. His face has the white and carmine tints, the refinement that we admire in women; his eyes have an irresistible charm; his taste, and the richness of his attire, set the fashion at Court. He has contracted a nervous complaint, which sets him apart from the common. Thus, when he speaks to a lady, he closes one eye, as if he were taking aim at her. He is perpetually saying: "I could give myself a kick in the backside!" One hand is ever at his sword-hilt, with the other he caresses his chin, like the beautiful Narcissus. His wit resembles his attire;

he changes it repeatedly, but that which he puts on is always as brilliant as that which he doffs. He does not lack education; and will repeat, for fear lest it be forgotten, "I translated Virgil with the Abbé Remy!" For the rest—principles, he has only those of the libertine; prejudices, only those of the *noblesse*; his virtue is but egoism. He is a man without heart or soul, and is nicely constructed to have lived alone with the serpent in the terrestrial Eden. I consider him a genius in his own line, capable of, or at least fit for, anything. He has the air of believing that he will never die. "I build in nothing but stone," he says, "because in sixty or eighty years from now I do not want to have everything in ruins."

He does not, however, do anything to ensure himself a long life in this world and eternal life in the next. He drinks and eats and breathes for women only; he needs them of every age and complexion. Twenty men would be satisfied with his ordinary; this makes me declare that he is moulded in bronze. None the less, married at a very early age, he has had the destiny of all the husbands of his acquaintance. He has not taken the matter seriously, and has even spoken of his equerry as the husband of his wife. The latter died of rancour. Under his garments Richelieu wears as a scapular a list of all the mistresses he has had, and many of them have inscribed their own names on it. This list, which he has shown me, begins with the Duchesse de Bourgogne, the second Dauphine. Richelieu plumes himself on having had her as his governess, and afterwards as his mistress—a dangerous honour, which earned him a confinement in the Bastille when he was only sixteen. Amongst the innumerable names which this list contains, names of servant wenches and duchesses, kept women and princesses of the blood, occur the names of Madame d'Averne, de Guébriant, de Gacé, de Mouchy, de Polignac, de Sabran, de Nesle; it might be called a catalogue of the Court. Richelieu's worst quality is his friendship with Mauconseil, a man who would make a devil out of an angel. It is my mania to judge people by their names, and Mauconseil, which signifies *evil counsels*, promises no good. The poor Duke entered the Bastille as though making a triumphal entry into Rome. It was the third time he saw it so nearly. I am assured, however, that on the road he was astonished there was no one at the windows to see him pass.

I spent whole days at the Bastille with Leblanc and d'Argenson, who, seeing that the affair did not advance, sometimes absented themselves; but I persisted in my investigations and conclusions. Pompadour and the Abbé Brigaut were promoted to be accusers. Amongst those detained there were some whom I took a pleasure in torturing, threatening them with the supreme penalty. This was part of my revenge; in my heart I wished these imbecile conspirators no great harm. I said to Malézieux, who used to mimic my expressions and my language to amuse the idlers of Sceaux: "Monsieur, when I have got your head cut off, I shall defy you to imitate me. Even now, it is not you who can amuse yourself at my expense." In my daily visits to the Bastille, I did not forget the Iron Mask, who was reported to have died there. At the Court, it was believed he was still in confinement there; and the Regent himself was so convinced of it, that immediately after the death of Louis XIV he repaired to the Bastille to find out who he was. The governor confessed his ignorance of the matter; he even seemed to doubt whether that mysterious prisoner had ever existed. His Royal Highness smiled sadly, and raised his eyes to Heaven. This is what an old gaoler told me, who added, with a shake of his head:

"I, Monseigneur, saw the man in the Iron Mask on the day of his death."

"You have seen him," I interrupted, fixing my eyes on the hideous and deformed old man, as black and sinister as the walls of the dungeon. "You have seen the Iron Mask?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, as I see you. M. du Junca—and a good man he was, as discreet as the Bastille!—was then lieutenant of the King. M. de Saint-Mars arrived from the Iles Sainte-Marguerite to take over the government of the Castle. He brought with him in his carriage a tall man, well-made and well-dressed, wearing a mask of black velvet."

"An iron mask?"

"No, Monseigneur. I know what I am saying; but I can answer to you that it was a velvet mask, which he never removed even at his meals. During the four years that this prisoner was living in a room in the Tour de la Bertaudière, where he was treated like a prince, I saw him often, and once without his mask. M. de Rosarges, who seemed much attached to him, and never let him out of sight, was taken ill whilst M. de

Saint-Mars had gone to Versailles, whither he was summoned every month by the King. M. Reilh, our surgeon-major, assumed the post of custodian to the unknown; I saw the latter at the window of his room, making signs as though to attract attention. I had time to observe his features, which appeared to me to be those of a man of forty; only, his hair seemed to me quite white. He only showed himself for a moment; I presume that M. Reilh having fallen asleep, the prisoner had profited by this slumber to remove his mask. M. de Saint-Mars said to M. Reilh on his return: 'You should have killed him; the King would have approved you.' I always imagined the man in the mask to be some great lord. He was served from the governor's table, and on silver plates; all those who approached him spoke to him with respect, and hat in hand. At last he fell ill, and was delirious; he talked loudly, so much so that everybody was dismissed, even the sentinels. M. de Rosarges shut himself up to weep. By order of M. du Junca, who never left the room, I went to inform our almoner, M. Giraut, who, at first, refused to confess the dying man; but, by dint of threats, he was constrained to it. M. de Saint-Mars went every morning to Versailles during this illness, which lasted a week, and the Abbé Giraut said mass in the room of the masked man. Suddenly the rumour spread that he was to be transferred to the dungeon of Vincennes; but there was nothing in it, for he died that night, and the body was at once removed for interment in the cemetery of Saint-Paul, which receives our dead. No precaution was spared which might destroy any chance of revealing his identity. M. du Junca had his furniture and linen burned, and his room whitewashed. I ventured to speak of this prisoner to M. Reilh, who said to me: 'It is a state secret; any one who discovered it would be lost; but this secret is buried with him.'"

"Are they not afraid lest anyone should disinter the body?"

"What would be found?—a stone in place of a head! It would take a mighty clever man to identify him in such a condition."

These circumstantial details, which I acquired almost without questions, struck me so forcibly that I took them down in writing as they fell from the lips of this gaoler, who had no interest in deceiving me. I asked him if any other witnesses of the facts he had related to me were in existence.

"Of course," he said, "we have prisoners who were here in his time; but their testimony cannot be called, because they have seen nothing outside their dungeon walls. As for MM. du Junca, de Saint-Mars, de Rosarges, Reilh, and Giraut, they did not survive the man in the mask long; they all died within the space of a year."

I questioned him in order to discover whether he had forgotten in what room the wretched man had been confined.

"It was the third in the Tour de la Bertaudière, Monseigneur; it has not been occupied since; I can take you there at once."

It was almost night; I promised to return on the morrow, and I went back to the Palais-Royal with the information I had derived. The Regent, to whom I imparted it, shrugged his shoulders in pity, and advised me to think no more of this gaoler's tale; but I insisted with such obstinacy that he should visit the Iron Mask's prison with me, that he consented, less from curiosity than because he lacked the firmness to refuse.

"All that I shall see," he said, "will teach me no more than I know."

On the following day, under the pretext of assisting at my interrogatories, he accompanied me to the Bastille; and, in spite of his *incognito*, the homage which greeted him would have turned him from the aim of his visit if I had not recalled it to him. M. de la Maison-Rouge relaxed his severe air, and sought to make us forget that he was lieutenant of the King at the Bastille; we thanked him for all his amiable expressions. The gaoler, proud and moved to be serving as guide to His Royal Highness, came near to breaking our necks as he showed us the wonders of the Bastille, from the *oubliettes* to the iron cage of the Cardinal La Balue. I shuddered at the thought of a Cardinal being imprisoned in a manner which might have been deserved, say, by a Lagrange-Chancel. The prison of the Iron Mask surprised me more; it is a large chamber, amply illuminated by a grated window; I noticed that it must have been tapestried before it was whitewashed anew. On entering, I did not receive the gloomy impression I was expecting; the Regent, on the contrary, stood motionless, and folded his arms. The gaoler remained outside, from respect.

"What the devil," I cried, with an outburst of laughter, "can the poor gentleman have done to suffer such cruel martyrdom?"

"Dubois," replied the Regent, with a coolness which I found contagious, "I swear to you that if the Duchesse d'Orléans took it into her head to have a lover, I would not repeat the story of the Iron Mask."

"In truth, Monseigneur, I am tempted to believe that you are well informed upon this episode of the preceding reign."

"I!—no; I am speaking on supposition, in idleness. How many years did he stay in the Bastille?"

"Only four; but more than thirty at Pignerol and the Iles Sainte-Marguerite."

"It is a singular punishment to be made to pass for dead in your lifetime."

Meanwhile, I examined the walls curiously. They bore no inscription; they had been scraped after the prisoner's death; but I thought I perceived, through the rust of the window bars, some interlaced letters, which I took to be an F and an M. I pointed them out to His Royal Highness, who shivered, and mocked at my fancy. I distinctly saw on the iron plate which filled up the back of the chimney, some characters engraved with the point of a knife. I dismissed the gaoler, whose eyes were fixed upon our every movement, and sought to decipher words which had been sufficiently erased to escape the inquisition of M. du Junca. The Regent made use of his sound eye, and, by dint of guessing, I recovered the following verses, which I recognised as forming part of the elegy *To the Nymphs of Vaux*. La Fontaine had composed this courageous elegy to plead the cause of his friend Fouquet, arrested and brought to trial at the moment of his greatest favour. I set them down just as they were:

"Pleurez, nymphes de Vaux,
La cabale est contente,
Oronte est à présent
Mais c'est être innocent
Si Louis sur vos bords,
La plus belle victoire
Fléchissez ses arrêts,
Faites croître vos ondes; . . .
Oronte est malheureux, . . .
Un objet de clémence. . . .
Que d'être malheureux. . . .
Un jour porte ses pas; . . .
Est de vaincre son cœur! . . .
Tâchez de l'adoucir. . . ." *

* Weep, ye nymphs of Vaux, May your waves swell, . . . The cabal is content, Orontes is wretched, . . . Now is Orontes An object for clemency. . . . Yet to be innocent, Is but to be wretched. . . . If on your paths, Some day Louis passes. . . . The fairest victory Is to vanquish his heart! . . . Overcome his decrees, Seek ye to soften him. . . .

The singular arrangement of these unrhymed verses, and the initial letters of each hemistich, led me to seek for the sense of the enigma, and I composed a name with the capitals.

"FOUQUET!" I cried.

"Silence, Dubois," said His Highness, in a terrible voice. "If I were to obey the last wishes of Louis XIV, you would not be alive to-morrow."

"Monseigneur, chance alone is guilty. What! the Iron Mask was no other than Fouquet?"

"Let us be out of here; one cannot breathe in this room. I never think of Fouquet's destiny without a shudder."

"What was his crime, then, that it could not be punished in the light of day?"

"Fouquet loved the Queen."

The Regent, whom the recollection terrified, did not feel relieved until he had left the Bastille. He exhorted me to inviolate secrecy, and revealed to me the scene he had witnessed at the death-bed of Louis XIV. He had already betrayed the secret himself at a supper in the Luxembourg; Richelieu, Nocé, and many others know it; I am no longer responsible for it, and, like the barber of King Midas, I tell it to paper, which will be no more discreet than the water-lilies.

The affair of the conspiracy was still at the same point. The Duchesse d'Orléans and the dowager bastards served the Duc du Maine as advocates and spies. Leblanc and d'Argenson only seconded me timidly, and the last deserted me altogether for his nuns. I thundered, swore, declared to the Regent that he had better give up everything, open the doors of the Bastille, and cry: "Let everyone leave who likes!"

He repeated to me that his intention was not to make princes criminals of state; he was moved to pity over the lot of his enemies, and finished by begging me to torture the poor people no longer. The dispatches I received from the commissioners charged with the preliminary proceedings against the Duc and Duchesse du Maine were anything but satisfactory. I threw the cart after the horse. Here are the imbecilities that the King's people wrote me.

Amongst the mass of papers, notes, fragments of letters, and Spanish letters that had been seized from Madame du Maine, there was one from Alberoni in which that Catiline said to the

bastard: "As soon as war is declared in France, set fire to all your mines." The Duc du Maine could not deny that this letter had reached him; but he pretended that the phrase was used figuratively, and that it referred to the King's *corps de ballet*, whom he was to debauch for the King of Spain. And the commissioners drew up a report of this buffoonery! That was nothing; the Duc du Maine threw all the blame on his wife, who admitted it, adding: "M. d'Orléans believes that I hate him; if he would follow my advice, I should prove a better councillor than anyone." She had been advised that she would run no risk if she took the onus of everything on herself, and that her sex would save her even from imprisonment. The Duc played the innocent so insinuatingly, that one might have taken him to be one. "I am not anxious to return immediately," he said, when he was taken to Dourlens, "for my innocence cannot fail to be acknowledged; but I only speak of my own!" Madame du Maine, who found prison tedious, asked for a change of scene, as the air of Dijon was injurious to her health. The Regent, worn out by Madame d'Orléans' tears and supplications, would have had her set at liberty; but wiser counsels prevailed, and the little conspirator was transferred to the Château of Châlons-sur-Saône, which she found even more disagreeable than that of Dijon. She screamed to her enemies in the Bastille that she was going away to die of grief and disgust. Mademoiselle de Launay had nothing more urgent to do than to acquaint Madame la Princesse that her daughter begged for her blessing. With much difficulty, Madame la Princesse obtained permission to see this beloved daughter, who flew into a horrible passion because her mother did not bring her her release. Madame la Princesse even sought to interest the Pope in behalf of the little Duchesse; she flooded the Palais-Royal with imploring letters, which I answered at my discretion. At last, the Regent, exhausted by this lachrymose and despairing correspondence, took the pen from her fingers, by writing that he would gladly pardon Madame du Maine if she had only conspired against his life, but that he must perforce keep her in prison since she had been guilty towards the King's government. The Duc du Maine, deeming that he had only to ask, asked permission to go hunting; for all recreation, he was allowed to get astride a sorry hack, and

make the round of the citadel in the company of four men. But what vexed Madame du Maine more than all else was the tardy notice that was given her of the infidelities of her Cardinal; Master Polignac was no more satisfied by the Du Maine than the latter was satisfied by his red hat. He had only to stretch out his hand to find a wench of good-will, a maid of honour; meanwhile, Mademoiselle de Montauban became the rival of her patroness. Ah! if she had but been informed of it, the Cardinal would have lost his two eyes! For Madame du Maine is a female Orlando Furioso; at Dijon she used to have fits of madness, vapours, or epilepsy; she broke everything, screamed, rolled about the floor, and the company fled in terror; she would have beaten the Regent at the head of his army; then she would calm herself by playing cards, laugh and eat, until the next frenzy. As for the Duc du Maine, he gave himself the title of Prince of the horned race; and he wrote to Madame d'Orléans: "Prison is not where I ought to be put, but in a short jacket, with my backside to the birch, for having let myself be so led by the nose. My traitress can get herself made cardinal at her ease; I want never to see her again, even at a distance."

During these interminable delays, I caused to be arrested, tried, and condemned, a petty conspirator of the Bois de Boulogne, who had concluded a bargain with Alberoni to assassinate the Regent, or abduct him, living or dead, into Spain. It was one Lajonquière, a colonel dismissed the service for misconduct. He arrived in Paris with two hundred scoundrels disguised as merchants, of whom he was the chief. Lajonquière had such precise information that it seemed as though it had been furnished him by Nocé or myself. He fell right away into an ambuscade hard by La Muette, whither His Highness was repairing; he had chanced to lie there one night, but did not trouble to go there the next day. The assembly of men in the woods gave a clue to the plot; the musketeers tracked down all these worthy fellows like wolves; some were killed, others were taken, but Lajonquière escaped, and thought himself in surety in the Low Countries. There, as he was boastingly repeating that there would be news of a great stroke, that the Regent of France would die drunk and without confessing, Basnage informed me of it; and without

taking counsel of His Highness, I sent four French alguazils, pupils of d'Argenson, armed for this occasion with knives, in his pursuit. These brave fellows met my man in a street at Liège, and escorted him, with a pistol held to his head, to the frontier, all most politely and without the waste of a word.

"Gentlemen," cried the wretch, "you have kept my place in the Bastille? I see that I am lost, and shall be drawn and quartered."

"My friend," answered one of my supporters, "that is, probably, the first true word that has ever left your lips."

Lajonquière could not finish differently. I had augured ill enough of him when he wrote to the Regent: "Monseigneur, if, within a week, I do not receive a pension of fifteen hundred livres, I do not give you a month to live."

Otherwise, I saw that the conspiracy was not to cost a hair of the head to any one. All the women at Court had made magnanimity the fashion, to imitate the good Regent, who himself imitated Jesus Christ pardoning his executioners on the cross. When once Madame d'Orléans' tears were dried, I fully foresaw the issue of the affair. Mademoiselle de Valois was reconciled with Richelieu, and even with her rival de Charolais, to such an extent that she introduced herself with her into the Bastille. His Highness was still jealous of the attractive Duc, and kept him in prison, although he could not prevent his daughter from loving him. Richelieu—incredible as it may seem at the Bastille—obtained, if not his liberty, at least all that assists one to dispense with it. Mistresses!—they would have broken down the walls to reach him; he was given a complete household, a *valet-de-chambre*, two lackeys, a cook, musical instruments, furniture, anything he wished. It was a deplorable spectacle to see the Cellamare conspiracy turned to ridicule from the mere fact of a young fop adorning and scenting himself in a state prison as if for a ball, and of nights from the terrace ogling the girls and women of the upper and lower ranks, sending and receiving kisses and glances through the air. Did not people think fit to make excursion to the Rue Saint-Antoine and round the moats of the Bastille! "I have reversed the history of Danäe," said Richelieu on his liberation, "these devils of women have turned M. de la Maison Rouge into a lamb."

The Regent, who had crushed his foot, while returning one dark night from Asnières, where the Parabère had invited him to supper, was keeping to his room; he summoned me, and, according to my habit, I ran the risk of having my two feet crushed.

"My son," he said to me, as I entered, "there must be an end of this."

"Of what or of whom, Monseigneur?"

"Of conspirators, past, present, or to come. We have already attached too much importance to these little malcontents."

"Yes; but up to the present you have been looked upon as good-natured, you will now pass for an imbecile."

"You abuse my kindness in submitting to everything from you."

"To continue:—what expedient have you devised to wash all these vile reputations in less than no time, and without using *aqua-fortis*?"

"Bah! Memory does not last beyond a month in France. People will be astonished at first, then they will laugh, then all will be forgotten and set to the account of old sins."

"I must tell you once more that you are mistaken, the conspiracy did not only exist in our imaginations."

"No doubt."

"Then here is the whole *abominable conspiracy* plainly fallen to pieces."

"To save the appearances of justice, each of the accused must be induced to write an apologetic declaration of innocence."

"And Richelieu will say with Caesar: *Veni, vidi, vici!*"

"Not so; Richelieu is not included in my clemency; he will be exiled. This time it is not We who will it."

"Your *I will*, Monseigneur, is the wish of everyone. Let us exile Richelieu then until you recall him; it will be better than leaving him to prance about in his curls and embroidered coat on the terrace of the Bastille to attract all the women to his vicinity. Let the others be innocent; it is returning good for evil. At anyrate the Duc du Maine's imprisonment will have been a good thing, even if it has done no more than promote his soul's salvation. You know that all through Holy Week he fasted and abstained to such an extent that he was like to die of it. Here is a letter I have received telling me of his devoutness; he serves at Mass and communicates daily."

"That requires confirmation."

"I am too honest to give it you before I am made a bishop. If I become Pope, I will make you kiss my slipper as a penance."

"Try to become an honest man, that is even more difficult, and hurry on the prisoners' admissions."

I was disgusted at the trouble I had so uselessly given myself; however, I obeyed with zeal; it is one of the duties of a statesman, who should ever subordinate his opinion to his interest. I began by announcing the Regent's will to Madame du Maine, who answered in a vehement letter informing me that I should obtain all the necessary admissions and information from Mademoiselle de Launay. Perhaps she imagined that that young lady knew all her secrets; more likely she wished it to be understood that her husband had less cause for jealousy than he gave her. Mademoiselle de Launay was suffocated by this ingratitude, when I addressed her a few questions on the strength of Madame du Maine.

"The Duchesse has lost her wits in prison," she said, "as well as her friendship with me. Does she wish me to say that she is guilty? But I shall say nothing, not even that she is innocent."

I wrote again in different terms to Madame du Maine, and threatened her with perpetual imprisonment if she refused to submit to His Royal Highness's wishes; my letter evidently made her reflect, for thereupon she gave way.

Matters being thus, the conspiracy of Brittany, one of the branches of Cellamare's conspiracy, came to prove to the Regent that his clemency only tended to encourage the revolt.

"The devil take them!" he said to me; "I shall not meddle with it, and I will leave you, Dubois, to do as you please. Pardon or punish, it is your business; I have shown mercy to the first, but this time I will agree to anything, even to a sanguinary example. I repeat it to you: fill my part under these circumstances, and be as severe as I was merciful."

I plume myself on having acted as I ought for the repose of the Kingdom, with the approval of the Regent; I nominated commissioners under the presidency of M. de Châteauneuf, ex-ambassador to The Hague. This worthy man had already been created Councillor of State at my request, on condition that he would send his rogue of a nephew, the reverend Père Castagnère,

to the Mississippi. It is true that I was supreme judge of the four Breton gentlemen justly accused and condemned to death in the following year. I had to hold out against the solicitations of their families and their friends. I steeled my heart firmly; this has rendered me odious to fools and malcontents, who saw nothing more in this grave business than four heads cut off in the town of Nantes. What do I care if they have confounded my hand with that of the headsman! I could not, with any regard to justice, grant their lives to rebels who compassed the death of the Royal family.

At last, Madame du Maine sent me her written declaration, in which she confessed to having acted without her husband's knowledge, although in his name. By this devotion she prepared herself a sort of reconciliation. The letter was read in full Council; this sorely wounded the fair prisoner of Châlons. "You see," she cried, "they wanted to have my writing!" The Duc du Maine, whom the Regent informed of it for fear of a contradiction, declared that he held his wife responsible for her acts. The declarations of the others were all alike; it was Fontenelle who had drafted the model. They were examined by the Council, which looked upon them as proofs of the conspiracy; but full and complete pardon was granted by the Regent to all who had been in intelligence with Spain. Vincennes and the Bastille opened their doors to a host of people whom I had arrested as a measure of precaution.

"Now," said His Royal Highness, "it is you they will detest, and, if you are assassinated, I wash my hands of it."

"Say that to others, Monseigneur! They will not assassinate me until I meet them half-way."

However, since that time I gave up going abroad by night alone and on foot. La Fillon bears me a grudge for this; but so far I only fear assassination from this tenacious retention of urine.

The Duc du Maine, more angered than any fool in France, gave no thanks when informed that he was free. He retired to his lands at Clavigny, near Versailles, swearing, but somewhat tardily, that he would not be entrapped again. The brute had written to his wife that if she ever showed her face before him again, he would put her in such a condition that she would be no longer able to conspire against his life and that of the King of

France. He drove out all his servants, and his confessor was the only one he did not change. He would have changed his wife, if he had been able, with the Pope's dispensation.

Madame du Maine, tired at having had to play cards and suffer from the vapours for six months as her sole recreation, returned to Sceaux, as gentle as a cat whose nails have been cut. She began by forming a new household; and, when Mademoiselle de Launay came with an offer of her services, "Mademoiselle," said she, "go and seek employment from your friends."

Mademoiselle de Launay, however, would take no rebuff, bestirred herself so busily, that she has maintained her position at Sceaux, as witty and as frail as ever. Division could not long obtain between the Duc and the Duchesse. The latter mouthed despair and repentance for a few months, writing: *My beloved husband*, at one time; *Barbarous husband*, at another; the letters were returned to her, at first, with the seals unbroken; then they remained unanswered, then were answered with reproaches. Madame du Maine, who no longer showed herself either at balls or at the play, went one morning to the Duc d' Orléans to implore him to reconcile her with her cripple.

"Madame," said the Prince, "I shall not interfere, for I have learned from Sganarelle that it is unwise to put one's finger betwixt the bark and the tree."

Madame du Maine went on to caresses, which might have grown tender, if the Prince had not said to her, as he kissed her on both cheeks:

"Calm yourself, Madame; I make no objections; besides, it depends upon you more than upon him."

Madame, who entered upon this speech, burst out laughing.

"If the du Maines are reconciled," said she, "I shall repeat, like my late father, 'Agree amongst yourselves, Scum!'"

"Madame," said the little Duchesse, with a blush, "was your father at variance then with your mother?"

"In brief," resumed the Regent, "I do not care whether you be reconciled or not."

The Duc du Maine had been made to believe that His Highness dreaded nothing so much as to see him on good terms with his wife. He signed a treaty of peace, on condition that the Cardinal de Polignac should no longer make a third party in the establishment.

"There they are reconciled," said I, when I heard the news; "disagreeables will begin again, and will fall upon us like hail."

Indeed, during the night they had the audacity to affix a huge picture painted on canvas to the gate of the Palais-Royal, representing three gallows, above which a peacock hovered admiring his own tail. It was an allegory that I understood too well to expound; they might have thought me the author. The Regent was diverted at this picture, which he exhibited in his gallery, promising a reward to anyone who should discover its meaning. Everybody came to exploit his knowledge. Arouet was not the last to arrive. "Oh, oh!" said he, "it smells of *Oedipus*, a league off!" This phrase was all the more bold, in that Voltaire was accused of having written the tragedy of *Oedipus* against His Royal Highness, as though there was a great likeness between Jocasta and the Duchesse de Berri. Some sphynx of darkness affixed these Latin verses one night, *ad pictoris commentarium*:—

Hic fastus, Relosane, tuos junonius ales,
Spurticiasque tuas crux tibi trina notat.
Quâ regnas arte agnovit plebs atque senatus.
Haec tibi, princeps, crux debita prima fuit.
Contemptos credas divos, Relosane, secundâ
Dignus eris; merces tertia fit scelerum.*

"The Devil!" said the Regent, when these verses were shown him, "if Madame du Maine could write Latin elegiacs, I would give her the reward for explaining the picture."

"Monseigneur," I replied, "it is some college pedants who have achieved this allegorical masterpiece. They would only deserve one gallows, were that less high than Haman's."

"They are welcome to conspire in this manner and in Latin at their own sweet will; they will not make me angry."

I believe the picture was conceived and executed in the arsenal of Sceaux.

There was more than one man in that Château who merited hanging.

* D' Orléans, Juno's bird is your portrait; these three crosses are the signs of your abominations: the people and the parliament know by what arts you reign. The first cross is due to the sorcerer; despiser of Heaven, the second cross is due to your irreligion; the third is the recompense of all your crimes.

The lesson I had wished to give Alberoni had not been without its effect; the war declared against Spain was spent in marches and counter-marches. The French army, commanded by Berwick, obtained some successes, at which Philip V took fright. That Prince, who was, I know not why or how, beloved in France, had counted on the defection of our troops. He repented at having been goaded so far that he could not retreat without dishonour; hence his dissatisfaction with Alberoni, a dissatisfaction which grew until it led to the latter's disgrace. In the early days of January 1720, Alberoni received an order from the King to leave within twenty-four hours, and cross the frontier. Alberoni made no attempt to soften Philip, who was buying peace of the Regent so cheaply; he only took the time to pack his baggage, so great was his dread lest they should be as eager to keep him in Madrid as they had been to be rid of him. What he carried off in gold and silver was enough to impoverish Spain.

Alberoni, under the escort of a French officer, took refuge on French soil; to imprison him for the remainder of his days in the Bastille would have been a Machiavellian act of vengeance from which I was wise enough to refrain. It seemed to me a finer thing to enjoy his abasement as my workmanship. It was I who handed him a passport to enable him to proceed without anxiety from Gironde to Antibes, where he embarked. I had made a point of signing my name in big letters, and wrote to him that should he desire to come to Paris, I begged him to accept an apartment in the Palais-Royal, on the same floor as my own. He did not reply to my politenesses, but went on to Italy, where they distrusted such a dangerous guest. Genoa and Rome shut their gates to him; but the Pope had need of his talents, which showed to disadvantage on a less vast stage: it was a question of destroying the little republic of San Marino. However he may hope to live as peaceably as any petty citizen of the Maremma, for they begin to feel grateful to him for having preserved the Inquisition in Spain. I will say of him, as Madame said of the Maintenon: *Pater noster, libera nos de* Alberoni! *Amen.* To-day the dear Cardinal must be fifty-eight; I am gently completing my sixty-fifth year. The chances are against me, for I have seven more years than he and a retention of urine.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE REGENT'S ILL-HEALTH—PORTRAIT OF NOCÉ AND THE ROUÉS —THE LUXEMBOURG—PHILIPPICS—AROUET DE VOLTAIRE— HIS PORTRAIT AND CHARACTER — REPRESENTATION OF OEDIPUS—THE ABBEY OF CHELLES — EXTRAVAGANCE OF THE DUCHESSE DE BERRI—HER SECRET MARRIAGE WITH RIOM — THE TOAD'S HEAD — ILLNESS AND DEATH OF MADAME DE BERRI

I HAVE said that the Regent had greatly changed both inwardly and externally since his Regency, which was dissipated, not in pleasure but in fearful debauches; at this, while outwardly laughing, I secretly groaned, for I knew from my own experience the frailty of human things, and the lees which lie at the bottom of the cup of pleasure, not to speak of health, that blessing without which all other possessions are as nought. Is it not melancholy, for instance, for a Cardinal-minister to have a bladder like mine? I dare not eat or drink for fear of falling into the hands of the doctors and apothecaries. The Regent will not have a long life; he will be struck down and die of apoplexy; that is his destiny, in spite of the bloodings of Chirac and Maréchal. However, nothing will stop him; he is no sooner out of his bed than he is doing his best to be ordered back again. I could pardon him his taste or his madness for women, in view of his robust temperament; but his suppers, and, the consequence of them, his drunkenness, make him simply his own executioner. I had not countenanced him in this sorry failing, but his Berri and his *roués* educated him in their school; he never drinks less than five bottles a day, and at the ceremonies of the table in the Luxembourg, he calls for the "vessel of Charlemagne," as he dubs his glass, a sort of little barrel, girt round with silver, which he empties at a draught. All the women at these nocturnal festivals used to drink like men who drink hard. Wines of Cyprus and Tokay were followed by brandy and liqueurs, until the Regency was compelled to fall under the table. Before the Duchesse de Berri's death, His Royal Highness was incessantly drunk both at the Council and at Mass.

The Duc d'Orléans would go to Asnières to visit the Parabère, to the Luxembourg, to Saint-Cloud, or to Chelles, and return in his carriage quite incapable of walking. One night he got out of his carriage on the road from Saint-Cloud, and fell up to his neck into a ditch full of mud, and in this plight sent for his mistress, Émilie, to pull him out of the gulf, as he said. This degrading condition was repeated every day, and my wise counsels could not overweigh the seductions of Nocé, who served as Mentor to this new Telemachus. Nocé, whom, with Broglie, I have not included in my description of the *roués*,* is a well-mannered scoundrel: for long he deceived me, as he did many others; I believed in his friendship, which was no more than a share of his hatred. I thank Heaven that I unmasked the traitor and reduced him to a condition in which he could not hurt me. The unworthy fashion in which he worked against me during my Embassy in England broke all our relations. Nocé looks like some tall Arab or Egyptian; Madame said he was black, green, and swarthy yellow; the phrase is more amusing than just. He has crisp black hair, the glance of a chameleon, and a serpent's breath.

"Nocé," I said to him, "you breathe of what you are; it is gall and not honey which flows in your veins." He is at least fifty, and still grovels in the mire. It needed all my credit to upset that of Nocé, who had so blinded His Royal Highness that he believed the Parabère was faithful to him. He knew very well, however, what was this piece of virtue with ten lovers. Nocé has, indeed, a certain wit, but it has an impertinence which runs to spite. He is the son of a former sub-governor of the Duc d'Orleans; on this title he treats with his dear Philip on equal terms. He has no more respect for God than for men, as though there were no thunder; but all his vices are subordinated to ambition and the pleasure of doing harm. According to my system of judging people after their names, I realised that his came from the Latin *nocere*, which means *to harm*. Only Satan can have christened him so well. Finally, his chief merit consists in his having transferred from the Regent's pocket to his own two or three millions of good money, which he has not spent in founding convents.

Broglie is another rogue, less interested, less false, less criminal than Nocé, but with Italian blood in his veins; that is enough to

* Dubois only speaks of the *roués* in this place; the description to which he alludes is wanting in the manuscript.

show he is not worth much. His elder brother was killed in battle; his younger is a worthy officer, tedious to see or listen to, otherwise an honest man, neither grasping nor a liar; such is not the *roué* who will be put to the wheel one of these days. In face he resembles an owl, with his blazing eyes and his beaked nose; he excels in digging up epigrams; he finds expressions so burlesque and at the same time so ingenious that the laughter absolves him; he is always laden with debts, for the moment he has a few crowns, he goes and loses them in the hells. He greatly contributed to disgusting me with the Luxembourg.

I should not have the effrontery to set down in writing what used to pass there; I finished by excusing myself from being present on the ground of my work. "Dubois," the Regent would say, "will desert us to-night; we must leave his chair empty and his glass full; we shall remember to behave ourselves lest we incur his reproaches." It is true that I often played a passive part in these orgies; and without the kindness of a great lady for me, when the lights were extinguished, I should have been reduced to nothing. His Royal Highness himself was not as happy as he would have liked. "My friends," the Regent would repeat, with tears in his eyes, "I am an unfortunate man! I shall have to sacrifice Venus to Bacchus! I have come to the point which Jove reached when he carried off Ganymede to pour his wine for him."

The Duchesse de Berri, who presided at all these *fêtes* with unflagging gaiety, knew the art of consoling her father's *ennui*. Supper began at about ten o'clock, and the guests did not leave the table except in couples and in their turn; there were cries, songs, shouts of laughter. The women were usually less numerous than the men. I have got a scar as a relic of one of these Bacchanalia, caused by a crystal vase that Madame de Sabran threw at me because I had kissed her. On the summer nights we strolled about the gardens without any ceremony or etiquette; the mistress for the time being set the example, and the Regent was not slow to follow it. I remember once that we heard the Carthusians chanting the midnight Angelus in the distance; we joined our voices, but to a different theme. This sybarite manner of life was no longer suitable to my age. 'Tis true that Anacreon, whom Richelieu held up to me as a model, was older than me when he celebrated wine, love, and Bathyllus, but then he was not a Secretary of State. An old man has an

ungraceful position amidst the follies of youth. The Regent even carried his oblivion of his age so far that I said to him, quite vainly:

"Monseigneur, you are more than forty."

"Yes, my dear Dubois," he replied; "but I have lived more than eighty."

"One would not judge so from your behaviour."

Above all, I could not forgive him for giving cause for fearful suspicions; it was all very well not to believe them; but one shuddered to hear them.

Of all his children, His Highness preferred his three daughters, the Duchesse de Berri, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, and Mademoiselle de Valois; I can understand his not caring for his great ninny of a Duc de Chartres. They ought to make him a grand master of the orders of Mount Carmel and Saint-Lazare, nothing could be better; I shall be much deceived if he does not take the vows some day. The Regent then conceived an affection for his daughters, who had a prodigious fondness for their father, which gave rise to gossip; but people grew accustomed to it, and the custom grew until they sang in the streets, the antechambers, and all over the place, the scurvy song which begins thus:

"Philippe est un joli mignon, etc."

These infamies came from the workshop of Madame du Maine: verse and prose, songs and epigrams rained down to swell these calumnies, and His Royal Highness was not the last person to repeat them. "What would you have me do?" he would say; "if the people were not to sing, it would weep." The good Prince would not believe that his intimates could be the authors of these insulting satires.

Amongst the most mordant and the most unpunished, I will mention the *Philippics* and the tragedy of *Oedipus*. The two poets who wrote them deserved the gallows. One was put in prison, from which he escaped; the other was loaded with presents. Everybody knows La Grange-Chancel and Voltaire. La Grange, whom I have frequented in company with Racine, Santeul, and Chaulieu, is a sheep with a hyena's head; otherwise he is a good man at heart and a *bon vivant*. He has a gnome's figure, opaque, heavy, and rolling in fat. One would not believe there could be so much gall underneath this inert mass, that stupid physiognomy, and these smooth locks. One is astonished

to hear a harsh and strident voice proceed from this weighty envelope. He is for ever repeating that he is good and his enemies wicked. He wrote tragedies at College, and those he composes to-day are the work of a schoolboy. He calls himself complacently the pupil of Racine, whose advice to him is to go and make shoes rather than comedies. The Abbé Grécourt, the Princesse de Conti, whose page he was, Madame du Maine, who had been free with her favours to him, made him what he is, an impudent rhymester, a furious libeller. He was under obligations to the Regent, who pensioned him, and assisted him on more than one occasion; but a law-suit having sprung up between himself and the Duc de La Force, on the subject of some estates in Périgord, he was anxious that his side should be held the better, because M. de La Force had been a Protestant, then an abbé, then a duke, then a huckster, then a thief, said he, in a voice of Themis. He applied for prompt justice to the Duc d'Orléans, who could do nothing, but let the tribunal condemn La Grange in the costs and expenses: *facit indignatio versus.* La Grange attributed his mishap to His Royal Highness, and from that time forth started to deafen him with verses which were pitiable, and, what is more, infamous. He gave voice loudly to the most atrocious charges against the Prince, who paid no heed to them. Impunity irritated La Grange. When asked why he attacked one so much greater than himself: "Why," he replied, "has the Regent taken La Force's part against me?" La Grange was a mad wolf, whom I tamed by a few caresses and some dinners. I summoned him, and begged him not to force His Highness to shut his mouth by the aid of authority. "M. Dubois," he replied, "I am not afraid of the Regent nor of any of his sycophants." My counsels were dissipated in smoke. The visits he paid me in this matter, without any conversion on his part, excited malicious tongues to attribute me a share in the *Philippics.* It was rumoured at Court that I furnished the facts which La Grange put into his odes.

"Well, well, Abbé," asked the Prince, "I hear of horrors being written at your dictation against my daughters and ministers."

"Monseigneur," I replied, "if my hand had committed the crime of betraying your Highness, I would cut it off."

"Believe me, cut nothing off unless it be the ears of your calumniators; but beg La Grange to spare the ladies."

The first of the *Philippics* were completed when the Cellamare conspiracy was discovered. La Grange was so intimately ensconced at Sceaux that I was tempted to lodge him in the Bastille; but my dread of the arm of Juvenal restrained me. La Grange, with incredible boldness, avowed himself to be the author of the *Philippics*, which were circulating everywhere, both in manuscript and in an edition printed at Amsterdam by the help of the rascally Rousseau. They were even attentive enough to send to the Palais-Royal a more dreadful copy than the others with notes envenomed by the vilest perfidy. Saint Simon had originally shown the Regent the two first odes, in which he was openly accused of having poisoned the Princes and of seeking to usurp the throne. The Regent tore them up, saying, "This is the work of a madman or a monster; I do not wish to take any notice of these libels, else I should have him condemned to death." It was I who brought him the third ode, which announced a continuation of this attack of the Furies. I did not wish to ruin La Grange, but to save the Regent from a poetical conspiracy. The Regent fell into a terrible passion when he found his beloved daughter, De Berri, involved in these atrocities. "Nocé," he cried, on the spur of the moment, "take fifteen musketeers and go in pursuit of this wretch, La Grange; kill him like a dog, there will be less left for the executioner."

Nocé would have gone, but I stopped him, pointing out to His Royal Highness that he would be furnishing arms against himself, and that such a revenge was neither just nor necessary. He yielded to my advice, and was grateful for it; I sent a warning to La Grange, and, when I thought him in safety, sent people in pursuit of him. The infernal Nocé had already circulated a rumour that the Prince wished to get rid of this disseminator of libels. The scandal was soon enhanced by such an indiscreet report; they went so far as to say that La Grange had been assassinated; his sudden disappearance made the false statement plausible. La Grange heard of it, and wished to look closely at the figure he would cut after his death; he returned to France, and was taken at Avignon by an agent of d'Argenson, who was more furious, although he had been less attacked than the Regent. The Princesse de Conti succeeded in obtaining the favour that La Grange should be sent, without a formal trial, to the Iles Sainte-Marguerite; soon afterwards, she effected the facilitation

of the eseape of her former page, who wanders through Switzerland, Italy, and Holland, continuing his *Philippics* and polluting all men's ears with them. Since he was in the habit of naming the Regent Busiris or Procustes, might it not have been as well to treat him after the pattern of those tyrants of antiquity. Undoubtedly, such a poet is more dangerous than a score of Cartouches.

The tragedy of *Oedipus*, which was represented with so much noise, and approved by His Royal Highness, has always seemed to me to be directed against the habits of the Palais-Royal and the Luxembourg. I have said it, but they would not believe me; the public, however, was as clear-sighted as I; whence a host of sarcasms pushed to the point of exaggeration. Arouet, moreover, was not in his satirical apprenticeship; ever since he left school he had been hurling his epigrams broadcast; he had composed the famous lines of the *Moabites* and the *Ammonites*. He had attributed to his brother in Apollo, Lebrun, whom he hated, the *J'ai Vu*, to which he might have added—*la Bastille! I have seen the Bastille!* I was the cause of the imprisonment which so rankles with him; he ought by rights to thank me for having lodged and boarded him at the King's expense; it afforded him leisure in which to write satire. There is much talk of his poem *La Ligue*, which, although professing to pass in the reign of Henri IV, is none the less an allegory of the present time, with the conspiracy of Cellamare and the du Maines. As for *Oedipus*, it is useless for him to deny its hostile intentions, I shall always find them in it. If the Duc d' Orléans had been led by my counsels, the incestuous *Oedipus* would have won for its author no gold medal with the effigy of Philip of Orléans, but a few years of penitence and seclusion. But no, this knave d' Arouet scratches with one hand while he caresses with the other; he flatters and maligns; he partakes of the nature of the cat, falsest of all the domestic animals. In Thibet, I wager, he would adore the grand Llama's excrement; in Paris he makes a jest of it. He is without heart or soul; but he possesses wit; he has but that, but he has it in the very soles of his feet: it is the devil's wit, if you like. They pretend that I resemble him; I do not take it as a compliment. In any case, he has little love for me, in spite of the incense he burns under my nose; were disgrace to come to me, he would pelt me with mud. He has not forgotten me in the *J'ai Vu*:

> "I have seen men of nothing holding the highest rank."

In the letters which he writes to me, he compares me only with the Sullys and Colberts, and in his rhymed epistles he sets the Cardinal de Richelieu far below me; I laugh in my sleeve and keep my countenance.

Voltaire is a long diaphanous body, yet he does not let you easily read the bottom of his thought. His lean, pale, and bony face is marked by a look of mockery, all the more perfidious in that it finds expression in fair words. He has a perpetual epigram on his pinched lips, whether he is speaking to a prince or to a lackey. He would show no more respect for God; he even affects to treat religion with a sovereign contempt. "Take care," I have said to him, "you are attacking a mighty power—the priests and the devout fair!" For my part, I do not plume myself on my piety, but intolerance of religion is my bugbear. Voltaire brings intolerance to his philosophy. Everything turns to poison beneath his pen; he extracts venom from the Bible, which he is fond of quoting. His modesty is but a transparent veil cast over by the exalted notion he has of himself; in that he gives a proof of taste. Madame de Villars is right in saying that he is like a touchstone which communicates its properties to the iron with which it comes in contact; indeed, I have seen fools lose their folly while communing with him. There is the wherewithal to make a reputation in the scraps of wit he drops without thinking. I have marked him as the most dangerous man in France, and events will show what he can do with his pen, which he has dubbed the arm of ridicule. He detests kings, but has made himself their courtier; he detests nobles, and he seeks nobility, styling himself pompously M. Arouet de Voltaire; he is envious of honour and fortune, and goes about preaching the mediocrity and obscurity of the poet. He would fain play the part of Enceladus against Heaven, and he flatters more than one Cardinal.

"Monsieur," I said to him, "would you, who wrote *Oedipus*, be able to explain the enigma of your own character?"

"Monseigneur," he replied, "I am not too sure of what I am, but I know what I should like to be."

Finally, Arouet, on whom the Regent has showered favours, is the anonymous author of almost all the epigrams which assail us. The most horrible part of it is that he never fails to bring them to me with great sighs of indignation. He will end by being

cloistered in the Bastille to do penance. Crébillon informed me as a certainty that the verses which circulated upon *Oedipus* issued from the same workshop:

"La grosse Valois, etc."

Arouet wrote both the question and the answer:

"C'est beaucoup d'honneur à Philippe,
Que de lui comparer Oedipe.
L'un ignorait ce qu'il faisait,
Mais l'autre sait bien ce qu'il fait."*

His Royal Highness does not know of the hatred which is excited against him by spiteful verses. Woe to the government which lets itself be taken in the breach by ridicule or contempt. Arouet, with his Oedipus, did us more hurt than Cellamare's conspiracy.

He had composed this tragedy at the age of nineteen. His detention in the Bastille, which I should have preferred to my retention of urine, gave him leisure to put the final touches to his work. It was no small task to have to rival the *Oedipus* of the great Corneille; that of Sophocles is only of interest to colleges. As soon as he was free of the bolts he approached the Comédie-Française, to induce them to produce *Oedipus*. "Its success," said he to the actors, "will be manifest to everybody; for the Regent is at the Palais-Royal." The actors did their utmost to dissuade him from giving this tragedy at the theatre, and, in order to disgust him, exacted numerous changes and an *honest* love interest, to use Dufresne's expression. Arouet thrust *Philocletes* aside for his incestuous Oedipus, and solicited permission to play the piece. Père La Rue, who knew him, exhorted me secretly to prohibit it. But Arouet, relying on all his friends and patrons, anticipated me with His Royal Highness. I was present, as was Madame d'Orléans, among the audience, which he knew how to turn to his advantage.

He arrived, presented by the Marquis de Breteuil, and dismayed us by his genuflexions. He was wearing a fine court suit, and I stopped him in the middle of his first sentence to ask him where he had bought it.

"Monseigneur," he said, "I have conspired against mythology,

* 'Tis doing great honour to Philip, to compare him with Oedipus. The one knew not what he was doing, but the other is well aware of what he does.

which represents Apollo as half nude, and against Boileau, who shows us him all mud-bedraggled, in the person of Colletet."

"Monsieur," I retorted, "so long as you only conspire thus, you may live without dread of the Bastille."

"I only dread displeasing His Royal Highness," he retorted.

"In that case, you have nothing to fear," said the Duc d'Orléans kindly, "I hear marvels of your *Oedipus*."

"Ah! Monseigneur," he replied, "I should like you to judge it for yourself."

"It is a disagreeable subject, that of Oedipus!" interrupted Madame d'Orléans.

"I only chose it, however, in order to please you," said the little Arouet, biting his lips.

"Yes," I went on; "but is it not the law of Aristotle to finish with the punishment of crime?"

"My Oedipus puts out his eyes, as you know," said Arouet.

"It is a fearful punishment to be made blind," added the Regent, touching his bad eye.

"May I hope," asked the poet, "that you will become so to the faults of my play?"

"So be it, Monsieur des *J'ai Vu*."

"Monseigneur, I swear to you that I had no share in that platitude; but I rejoice to be able to add to it that *I have seen Oedipus* produced under the auspices of your Highness."

"Voltaire," said M. de Breteuil, "tell us something about your masterpiece."

"In four words, you have the piece," said the insolent fellow; "Jocasta is a very worthy Queen, who has married her son in ignorance, at least so history says; Oedipus has, moreover, slain his father Laïus, also in ignorance: so true is it, that fatality enters greatly into the ill that is done and not into the good!"

"Yes," replied Breteuil, "has not Jocasta an affair of the heart with a certain Philocletes? It is very diverting."

"And holds up a good example," said Madame d'Orléans.

"Oh, *Mon Dieu!*" cried Arouet, "who would think of marrying his mother nowadays? Grave antiquity is full of such complications."

"Would you not be wise to change the name of Oedipus?" I suggested.

"For what reason?" objected the poet, with a look bristling with malice; "is it not his real name?"

"To be sure," said the Regent, "Corneille has certainly written a tragedy with that title."

"No doubt," pointed out Arouet; "but it is asserted that he would not have done so under the Regency. As a last favour, Monseigneur, I beg you to be present at the first performance."

"With Madame d'Orléans and my family," promised the good-hearted Regent. Arouet left, quite radiant from the arrows of satire he had shot on every side. When he had left, and also Breteuil and the Duchesse:

"By Heaven, Monseigneur," I cried, "do you not see that this scullion is laughing at you?"

"Is it his fault if he has the face and grimace of a monkey?"

"What! you did not understand that Oedipus was Philippe d'Orléans?"

"Tut! Then Jocasta is Madame d'Orléans, or Madame; and you must be Philocletes, the friend of Hercules, and the terror of monsters."

"I should be surprised if Arouet were not afraid of me. As for the friend of Hercules, I am yours, and that is enough for me."

"I am curious to see whether the pit will recognise me."

The performance took place. I suspect Arouet of having arranged the prodigious scandal. The Duc d'Orléans was in a box, with Madame, Madame d'Orléans, the Duchesse de Berri, Mademoiselle d'Orléans and Mademoiselle de Valois. All the mistresses and *roués* lined the house, and the pit was full of caballers. Already, for the name of *Oedipus*, on the placards, that of *Philippe* had been substituted in pencil; the latter forced himself to show no sign of his displeasure; but, before the curtain was raised, the spectators gazed at his box with murmurs and insulting laughter. The Regent feigned not to notice it, and continued to talk in a low voice with his daughter de Berri. When Dufresne appeared in the part of Oedipus, it was noticed, amid stupefaction, that he had made up to resemble the Regent himself. To complete the likeness, his perruque was an exact facsimile of his own. His Royal Highness could not refrain from laughing, his daughters imitated him; I cannot describe the applause which burst out whenever Oedipus spoke of his crimes, his incest, or the misery of his subjects:—

"Quand il se voit enfin, par un mélange affreux,
Inceste et parricide, et pourtant vertueux." *

All eyes, fixed upon the Regent and his family, directed these lines at him, and, to hide his embarrassment, he conceived the idea of applauding; his example was followed by everyone, and owing to this resolution, the success of which was not certain, he foiled the malevolence which had promised to strike him terribly in the public esteem. It is true, however, that at the moment when the high-priest said:

"Malheureux, savez-vous quel sang vous donna l'être?
Entouré de forfaits a vous seul réservés,
Savez-vous seulement avec qui vous vivez?" †

a voice was heard, interrupting the actor: "A pretty question! Who should know it better than he?" The actor went on:

"O Corinthe! O Phocide! Exécrable hyménée!
Se vois naître une race infâme, infortunée,
Digne de sa naissance et de qui la fureur
Remplira l'univers d'epouvante et horreur."

"The Devil!" interrupted the same voice, "pray, how many children are they to have?"

Madame de Berri changed colour, and was on the point of swooning. This singular impression did not escape the audience, which watched the spectacle in the box of His Royal Highness.

The performance was disturbed by a very burlesque incident. The daughter whom the Desmares had had by the Duc d'Orléans was in an open box, with her natural brother, the Chevalier d'Orléans. This fair damsel had only recently left the convent of Saint-Denis, where she had been brought up in ignorance of her parentage. Desmares had not seen her since her birth, because the nuns had declared that an actress would destroy, by her presence, the fruit of an education beneath the shadow of the altar. Desmares, who had fits of maternal feeling, could not forgive this rigour on the Regent's part. He had already, acting upon my advice, refused to be held responsible for another child, under the pretext that he was too much of a harlequin.

* When he beholds himself, through a dire conjunction, incestuous and a parricide, and virtuous withal.

† Wretch, do you know what blood 'twas gave you being?
You on whom pains await, due to you only—
Do you not even know with whom you live?

"What do you mean by that?" asked Desmares.

"I mean," answered His Highness, "that he is of too many different pieces."

The Elector of Bavaria was more accommodating, and accepted the *harlequin*, rewarding the mother with a snuff-box set with splendid diamonds. Mademoiselle Desmares, on leaving the convent, was installed at the Palais-Royal, under the paternal guardianship; she shed many tears that she was not legitimatised like her brother, the Chevalier d'Orléans, who loaded her with kindness up to the time of her marriage with the Marquis de Ségur. They took her to the theatre that she might be completely emancipated. Jocasta, who was more occupied with what was passing in the audience than with the stage, noticed an angelic face which blushed at the amours of Oedipus. She felt something, she knew not what, which distracted her from her part. Arouet was the first to perceive his queen's trouble, and he said in her ear:

"En ce moment vous oubliez Oedipe,
Reine des cœurs, pour penser à Philippe." *

"Little Sphynx," she answered, "you have guessed."

"My princess, are you thinking of him?"

"Of course; go and find out who is that pretty prude in a box with the Chevalier d'Orléans."

Arouet, in obedience to this imperious queen, ran after Fontenelle. "It is the maternal instinct speaking," said the latter; "that young person is her daughter." Arouet waited for the death of Jocasta before he told the Desmares of what he knew.

"Well, Arouet," she said, whilst the bravos resounded around her, "are you pleased? Why do you not kiss me?"

"I do," replied Voltaire, suiting the action to his words; "but are you not going to kiss your daughter, who applauded in so filial a fashion?"

"My daughter!"

Without removing her crown or the costume of her part, she came all breathless to the box, where her daughter sat, thinking no more of her than if she had never existed.

"Why! here is Desmares!" said the Chevalier d'Orléans.

"Jocasta!" said the little nun.

* Queen of hearts, you have forgotten Oedipus to think of Philippe.

"It is my daughter!" cried the actress, pressing her to her bosom, to her great astonishment. "Yes, it is my child," she repeated with tears.

But the poor child wept too to find herself the daughter of an actress. The Duc d'Orléans was so displeased at this scandal that he sent Desmares to sleep at Fort l'Evêque. Arouet obtained her release the following day. He had the effrontery to dedicate his tragedy to Madame d'Orléans, which action brought the tumult to its height. Madame de Berri, from bravado I think, was present five times in succession, with all her ladies, at *Oedipus*. "*Lassata, non satiata recessit*," said Juvenal-Arouet, with a proud air.

I should not venture to decide the precise degree to which the mute comparison of Oedipus and Philippe d'Orléans was carried. I deny with conviction the guilty relations that have been attributed to him with his three daughters; I have said that the Regent was a good father, and that was all.

His second daughter, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, was worthy to inspire love in anyone other than a father, but if several of the bolder court lords ventured to love her, not one of them attained her honour, or her dishonour, as you like to put it. She was admirably proportioned before her sojourn at the Abbey, where she put on over-much flesh; at the period when she was the ornament of the Palais-Royal, she had adopted a robe of some transparent tissue, designed in such fashion as to reveal all the lines of that fair body; her coquetry stopped at that. Her pink and white skin, ivory teeth, azure eyes, and locks of a golden blonde, each of these attractions went to make up a perfect beauty. Her small feet and delicate hands sufficed to fire the coldest with passion. Education had but half formed her. To sing ravishingly, to excel in woman's work, to paint like her father was nothing to her; her happiness was to give herself up to the tastes and pursuits of boys; perhaps, by dint of skipping, the same thing happened to her as to Marie Germain, who suddenly turned into a man. She preferred dogs, horses, and the chase to more peaceful pastimes. The Regent would not have her fancies thwarted, and laughed to hear her say she would become a nun. She had a martial boldness which I had reason to dread. One day, whilst passing through the garden of Saint-Cloud, my hat on my head, she ran across me with a pistol in her hand.

"Abbé, don't move," she said; "I want to see if I can rival William Tell's apple."

"Mademoiselle," I answered, in much alarm, "choose any other mark than my hat."

"No, Abbé, you are in the right position; do not be alarmed, I have more skill than you think."

"Help! Mercy, Mademoiselle d'Orléans."

The shot was fired, and her peals of laughter hardly reassured me. Fortunately, the pistol was only charged with powder.

"What, Abbé," said the Prince, to whom I related this pretty performance, "you are afraid of a nun."

"Great God! what a nun!"

It is true the duel of Mesdames de Nesle and de Polignac, in honour of Richelieu, had not yet come to testify to the courage of women. Mademoiselle d'Orléans, who played the prude, nevertheless grew amorous of an actor. It is the only *real* love I have known her to have; she was not yet Abbesse of Chelles.

Mademoiselle d'Orléans had a pronounced taste for the Opera, that sanctuary of all the goddesses of mythology; this taste seemed hardly congruous with that for the convent life. The Opera, however, is but a convent of a particular kind, in which novices are not admitted. Mademoiselle d'Orléans was often there in a box with her mother; she especially admired the dancing-girls, who are, as a rule, made to perfection, and all over graces. I knew not why she would come and go away sighing. Madame asked her the reason of this unseasonable melancholy.

"Ah," she said, "I am thinking of all the souls Satan steals from God!" Admirable Christian charity! For some time, I had noticed that Mademoiselle d'Orléans had become less interested in the salvation of the souls of the dancing-girls, than in Cauchereau, who makes a mighty agreeable singer; that is all I know of his talents. Moreover, he has a woman's beauty and grace; a white complexion, with very delicate feet and hands. I know not who it was who called him, with no spiteful intention, Mademoiselle Cauchereau. Whenever he sang, Mademoiselle d'Orléans never failed to be present, and rolled lack-lustre eyes, which gave me an itch to laugh. One evening, when Madame d'Orléans was alone in her box with her daughter, I entered in search of His Highness, who was investigating behind the scenes. I approached Madame d'Orléans, who received me, as always,

with a polite and indifferent coldness. Mademoiselle d' Orléans had her eyes fixed on Master Cauchereau, who seemed to me to have an understanding with her. The air he was warbling had an Italian character, mighty tender. Mademoiselle d' Orléans revelled in the hearing of him, and when he had finished with a brilliant arpeggio, she cried loudly, "Ah! my dear Cauchereau!" This gallant exclamation was uttered in so amorous a tone, that the audience laughed before realising whence it came; but when her blushes betrayed Mademoiselle d' Orléans, the gaiety redoubled and there was a clapping of hands; Cauchereau trembled with anger; Madame d' Orléans was irritated and aghast; Mademoiselle d' Orléans was like to faint; I, an impassive witness of this odd scene, had as much as I could do to keep a serious face at that "*dear Cauchereau.*"

"Mademoiselle," said the mother at last, "you shall go into a convent until I pardon you."

"With pleasure, Madame," replied the daughter, raising her head with a martial air.

I should not have believed the Regent would have had so little philosophy as to be angry with the *dear Cauchereau;* he wished to send him to the Iles Sainte-Marguerite; but Madame d' Orléans pressed her husband to make her daughter a nun; Madame de Berri advised it in her sister's interest; finally, after much discussion, the Duc d' Orléans resigned himself not to thwart this vocation, inexplicable, whatever one may say. He had several conferences with Mademoiselle d' Orléans, after which his eyes were moist with tears. Certainly, it costs something to a good father to separate himself from his daughter and bury her in a convent. He even refrained from speaking to me of it for fear of re-opening his wounds; he only said to me: "Happily the Abbey of Chelles is not far away." Madame had not been informed of this sudden resolution; it was feared she would oppose it, so great was her horror of nuns. They pretended that it was Mademoiselle d' Orléans' own wish to enter a cloister: at heart, she asked nothing better.

Two days after the adventure of the Opera, Mademoiselle d' Orléans returned from an excursion she had made on horseback to the Abbey of Chelles, with her sister De Berri. Madame and Madame d' Orléans were in company, quarrelling as usual. Mademoiselle d' Orléans entered fresh and smiling, and, as though it had been a comedy, flung herself at Madame's knees, saying:

"Will you allow me, Madame, to go to Chelles to perform my devotions?"

"And why to Chelles, if you please?" replied Madame, in dry tones; "can you not perform your devotions anywhere just as well as there? It is only important to do them well."

"No, Madame," replied Mademoiselle d'Orléans; "Chelles offers me a retreat which enchants me; these ladies of the Order of St. Benedict are angels."

"I warn you," said Madame d'Orléans, "that you need not count on becoming Abbess for a long time to come; Madame de Villars has the abbey, and I do not want to deprive her of it, for the Maréchal is one of my good friends."

"Bah!" replied Madame, "does the Maréchal Corneficius deserve more consideration than the Regent of France? Indeed, I am delighted that my grand-daughter should replace this Abbesse de Villars."

"Decide whether Mademoiselle de Chartres is to go to the Convent," retorted Madame d'Orléans; "we are not talking now of Madame de Villars."

"You are her mother; it is your affair."

"One should not prevent her from performing her devotions."

"Nor from becoming Abbess."

On the following day she set off in a carriage, which she sent back with a letter for her father. No one saw this letter, but I know that she said in it that she did not wish to leave the convent again. I repeat, this fantasy is difficult of explanation.

She had no sooner left Paris than the Regent committed follies to regain his daughter; it was all in vain; he took neither food nor sleep. He sent the Cardinal de Noailles to Chelles to bring back his religious daughter, who was already known as Sister Sainte-Bathilde; the Cardinal came back to Paris alone. The Regent reluctantly submitted, but he visited Mademoiselle d'Orléans daily. She was more charming than ever in her novice's robes; Madame de Berri also went to see her. I know not what pleasure a nun can take in renouncing the world, but Mademoiselle de Chartres had never been so satisfied with her lot and her companions. The Duchesse de Berri died; the attempts to get her out were redoubled; she clung more and more to her condition; at last she took the veil irrevocably, pronounced her vows which were, at anyrate, not heard by Madame or her

father. It was a melancholy ceremony, in spite of the brilliancy lent to it by Mademoiselle d' Orléans; those who were present remarked on the beauty of the nuns.

"These marble statues," said Nocé, "paid no attention to the men!" What is the use of seeking regret! Moreover, these little saints had everything they required.

During the sacrifice of Mademoiselle d' Orléans, the Prince was closeted with his remaining daughter, Mademoiselle de Valois. He continued his visits to Chelles, whither he never failed to repair once a week to pass the day. Madame de Villars, greatly to the annoyance of Madame d' Orléans, gave up her place to Mademoiselle de Chartres; she made so much noise that a pension of twelve thousand livres was given her until some abbey should fall vacant. I only went once with His Highness to take the air which is breathed by the doves of Chelles; I do not know who had given me so scurvy a reputation, but I saw nothing but flying figures and lowered veils. It is true that, at that time, I had not my Cardinal's hat. When at last Madame died, she had these words on her lips: "I should much like to know what it is that Sainte-Bathilde finds so attractive." Richelieu, who can only be believed at times, has boasted of an expedition to Chelles in the disguise of a young abbé; but, as he has said in my presence that he performed this feat in the costume of a novice, I have let him give himself the lie.

Madame de Berri died miserably enough; she did penance in this world, for it is better to be a milkmaid with good health than a Princess of the Blood given up by the doctors. That recalls me to my own case, a Cardinal with such a sorry bladder. I have cause to be afraid of death; I have everything to lose, and nothing to gain. Madame de Berri, however, had certain noble qualities, devotion in despite of her errors, generosity and greatness of soul. I see no great harm in hearkening to the greatest possible number of lovers, as long as one can stand them; but to be oneself one's own executioner is madness. I often forewarned the Duc d' Orléans, who was not to be shaken in his fatalistic attitude.

"Monseigneur," I said, "Madame de Berri will kill herself as surely as with a pistol shot; there is nothing she denies herself."

"That is because her birth and rank allow her everything."

"I am not the son of an apothecary for nothing; if your

daughter continues living as she does, I cannot promise her length of days."

"Short and sweet, Dubois? Is not that one of your maxims?"

"No, Monseigneur; long and sweet."

"Tell me where that is for sale? Nay, I defy you to add a single day."

"To the sum of my life! I do not contradict you. But if I meet with a precipice on a journey, I should seek to avoid it rather than throw myself headlong over it."

Madame de Berri did not amend her ways. She committed a thousand puerilities, which seemed to denote that her mind was no less deranged than her health. She borrowed from the East; on one occasion, I heard a tumult of people and martial music in the street; I thought that some ambassador from China or Siam had arrived, or that Law was recommencing his Mississippi parades; I ran to the window, as did all the bastards, and was the witness of Madame de Berri's triumphal entry on a theatrical car drawn by white horses, escorted by her musketeers, with trumpets and cymbals. It might have been the festival of the goddess Ceres with all her Corybantes. She passed through Paris in this burlesque equipage. On another occasion, she came to the Opera on a dais borne by four Hercules of her household. When she received the ambassador from Venice, she insisted on having a platform on which to place her seat, a Princess of the Blood of France, as she said, being worth three doges of Venice.

These were not her only errors; I have spoken as discreetly as possible of her Luxembourg, and have not wished to dwell on it. But the *roués*, guards, lovers, lost women, nocturnal suppers, the mysteries of La Muette—all these will find an historian. We shall see whether Saint Simon will cast away his modesty when he has to touch in writing upon things which have not even been spoken; in any case, let him beware of the Bastille! The errors of the great are secrets of State. For myself, whether through the bitterness of old age, prudery, or discretion, there are things my right hand would not divulge to my left.

The Duchesse, by one of those inconceivable fatalities which the Duc d'Orléans believes in, married Riom, who had no other

merit than that of being a nephew of Lauzan. This marriage was contracted secretly; then the Regent had consented to it, for fear of displeasing his cherished daughter. Riom acquired a terrible influence over Madame de Berri, who let him mould her as she had been wax. Yet what attraction was there about Riom? The question should be asked of Madame de Polignac, who shut up this "toad's head," as Madame called him in her best German, for two days and two nights in her bed-chamber. Madame's expression paints the man. A skin spotted like a serpent's, oily like a negro's, changeable like a chameleon,—forsooth, a treasure! His turned-up nose and disproportionate mouth were all he had to make himself agreeable. His wit, moreover, is dull and coarse, and, above all, Gascon. With this equipment, he has the effrontery to play the Court dandy!

"My daughter," said Madame to the Duchesse, when they were on friendly terms, "your Riom has a face like a Chinese kite."

"I admit it," she answered; "but I am satisfied with it."

"So is your second lady-in-waiting, La Mouchy."

"Whoever would not be satisfied with it would be hard to please! I promise you that love with him is no painted business."

The Duchesse said, as her father had said of old, "I am not jealous; if one sits down to a good meal, the pieces you drop matter little to you; it would be a foolish person who would stoop to pick them up." To live up to this view, Riom had a score of mistresses, and his wife took no notice of it. She had by him two, or it may have been three children, who were concealed until the marriage should be declared. The deplorable death of the Duchesse frustrated all these projects. Madame de Berri was some months with child, and made a mystery of it, especially to her father; for this reason she abstained from no pleasure party, and would even gallop on horseback chasing "sausages"; it was thus she spoke of the wild boar, the flesh of which she was greedily fond of. Riom had departed for the war in Spain with the regiment she had bought him; the nights at the Luxembourg, Asnières, and La Muette were carried on as riotously as ever. The Duchesse did not escape with impunity from her imprudences, which were mere bravado. She had a miscarriage, as the result of a night

spent in the open air. At that period, pregnant women were so common at Court that no more notice was taken of them than of those who were not. When it was over, Madame de Berri, who had not recovered, and knew it, hastened to change her mode of life. For a certain period she went to the Carmelites of Chaillot, where she had a cell. Two or three of her ladies accompanied her, and there, for two or three days, she cloistered herself as though the game diverted her. The priests, who have an eye on kings' palaces, knew the indiscretions of the Duchesse better than anyone. They did not breathe a word, but kept at their post. At last they exclaimed at Madame de Berri's expeditions. The latter was in no whit disturbed, but repeated them. It was said that she took a chill by walking in a garden while it was raining; she was brought back to Paris ill, thence taken to Meudon. Two months later she lay in Saint-Denis!

Her illness was accompanied by peculiar symptoms; as she concealed the fact of her miscarriage until the end, the doctors treated her for dropsy; she had insufferable pains in every part of her body, even in her hair. Her feet were swollen with water. They next thought of gout; but neither baths, bleeding, nor drugs could be victorious over this unknown sickness, as terrible as that of which the Antiochus of Scripture died. The Regent, haunted by strange ideas, was persistently asking her the cause of her illness; she invented a hundred falsehoods, even going to say that in a certain condition she had eaten melons. La Mouchy, whose time was occupied in robbing her mistress, revealed the truth to nobody. She required ice to be put to the feet, mustard on the head; or else she delivered sermons to the dying woman, which began and ended with "Riom the toad's-head." She said to her once, very inappropriately:

"Is it true that you are married to Riom, who is no prince of the house of Arragon, but a younger son of Gascony?"

"Ah, Madame," she answered, "let that jest alone. Have I not the honour to be known by you as too proud to stoop so low?"

The illness, however, grew worse; the Duc d'Orléans, who was not blind to his daughter's condition, did not stir from Meudon. Madame de Berri asked for the sacraments, and promises were made to the clergy, who gave them after making some farcical objections. I never inquired into these sorts of details; the only

thing exacted was a renunciation of Riom. The sacraments were duly administered. There was matter to make the Regent feel devout; he too will end thus. The poor Duchesse had lost all her plumpness, and she was distressed at the sight of her skeleton hands and arms. An hour before her death she asked for a mirror, and smiled at her excessive leanness. An emetic they gave her hastened her death, which was an easy one; on the night of the 19th she called her father in a low voice, whispered in his ear, kissed him, and uttered a great sigh, which was her last. It is not she whom I pity, but her unhappy father. When I heard the storm which lasted all that night, I looked at my watch, which stood at half-past-two; I cried, with a presentiment I could not understand, "The Duchesse de Berri is dead!"

There was an autopsy of her body. The doctors were amazed that she had not died earlier. She was carried by night to Saint-Denis, without any pageant; her household escorted the bier. The loss was only felt by those who had known her intimately. Her lovers regretted her. When her funeral passed, La Mouchy, not content with having robbed her while she was alive, played the flute at her window. The Regent exiled her from Paris, as well as her husband. He ought to have hanged her as a sacrifice to his daughter's manes.

CHAPTER XXXVII

MLLE. DE VALOIS—HER PORTRAIT, AMOURS, AND HISTORY —THE GRAND-DUCHESS OF FLORENCE — BETROTHAL OF MLLE. DE VALOIS—HER REGRETS — HER JOURNEY TO MODENA — MISTRESSES OF THE REGENT — MADAME DE PARABÈRE — LA SOURIS IS CARRIED OFF BY RICHELIEU— EMILIE: HER PORTRAIT — THE REGENT AS *WERE-WOLF*— MADAME DE DEFFANT

If Madame de Berri had not died so suddenly, Mademoiselle de Valois would not have married the Prince of Modena. It was a hastily arranged marriage; as impolitic as it was useless, and I am glad to think I took no part in it. Madame achieved this noble performance by herself, and neither her son nor her grand-daughter have ever forgiven her. Yet she meant it for the best.

Mademoiselle de Valois—Princess of Modena as she is now—was a reproduction of Madame de Montespan, with the blemishes, the indolence, and indifference of her mother. She had a romantic mind in addition: at the age of twelve she knew things of which a young girl should be ignorant; of things, which at her age she should have known, she was ignorant. Richelieu, and someone else besides, formed her education; the rest she did herself. She is not a beauty, not even a pretty woman, but she is appetising, tantalising, and I am hardly astonished that she should have met with all the love she could have desired. Her eyes have I know not what alluring charm, and the rose of her complexion well matches a satin skin. In spite of her innate indifference, she ought to grow tired of smiling all the time. This perpetual smile would be a more pleasant attraction, were it not for a large and hideous tooth like the tusk of a wild boar; her nose resembles that of a beak of prey; her legs are as long as a swan's; her body is big and thick set; briefly, her figure is imperfect, *gauche*, and clumsy, and, none the less, she pleases. Her wit would be greater if she was at the pains to show it; but everything wearies her, even her own person; as for singing, dancing, studies, they

are as nought to her, and I know nothing but a love affair which can dispel her apathy, which is greater than I can describe.

She carried on an affair of gallantry with Richelieu which was known to the town, the public, and the Court. The Regent—*débonnaire* as the song has it—had done his utmost to thwart a passion which vexed him. Neither Richelieu's alleged marriage with Mademoiselle de Charolais, nor his visit to the Bastille, nor his exile, could cool Mademoiselle de Valois' passion for him ; the entreaties and commands of her father had not the power that absence had over her heart. His Highness was not discouraged by the slanders the du Maines disseminated everywhere. Ever since the death of his beloved Berri, he shed bitter tears into the bosom of his younger daughter, and was as constant in his visits to Chelles as in his interviews with Mademoiselle de Valois, who was still holding secret interviews with Richelieu. All the time he was at Conflans with the Cardinal de Noailles, who almost performed the part of a go-between, this most gallant of dukes sallied forth every night and consecrated it to his mistresses. Soon afterwards, he was removed to Saint-Germain-en-Laye ; as he was better guarded there, Mademoiselle de Valois had to manœuvre in order to see him, and found him even more in love than before. The Duc d' Orléans was not slow in hearing of this arrangement, and I presume that he repented him of not having cut off one of Richelieu's four heads. The little Valois was unceasing in her entreaties for the complete pardon of her lover, whom she refused to believe unfaithful. The good father, little used enough to contradict her, contradicted himself by recalling the *Duc de Conflans*, as I called him since his exile. I have not the audacity to describe what happened in Mademoiselle de Valois' bed-chamber, which Madame entered unexpectedly ; it was not Richelieu whom she saw there. But instead of flying into a German passion, she choked with laughter, and said to her grand-daughter : " My pet, it is time you were married, high time ; I shall take the first prince who offers, unless he is club-footed like Scarron—God rest his soul ! "

I have related the death of the Maintenon,* but I forgot to add that this death delighted Madame without appeasing her hatred ; she spoke of her always with the same violence ; and, but for her

* This passage is missing in the manuscript. Madame de Maintenon died on the 15th of April 1719.

and Madame du Maine, no one would have thought to wonder whether Scarron's widow still existed at Saint-Cyr or not. It was there only that her loss was felt.

Madame brought her huge correspondence to work, and, if she had dared, she would have hired public criers to inform Europe that Mademoiselle de Valois was ripe for marriage. But in default of this expedient she sent one or two portraits of her grand-daughter to Italy; she was as flattered by the painters as by the courtiers. Whilst these portraits went to knock at the doors of every Court, Mademoiselle de Valois was in despair, Richelieu was in despair, and the Duc d'Orléans more than all. There was nothing to be seen but red eyes; in truth, the father appeared more inconsolable than the lover, and this lasted until the arrival of the courier who demanded the Valois' hand in the name of the Prince of Modena, who had fallen in love with the portrait, in the absence of the original. Madame scolded His Highness fiercely, because of the poor example he set of resignation. The Prince knew that he had more than one error to atone for; he wiped his eyes, bit his lips, and returned to Chelles to bear his ill with patience. Richelieu, whose ambition it had been to marry Mademoiselle de Valois, renounced his idea without doing himself too much violence; for he is as light as a soap-bubble. Mademoiselle de Valois continued her correspondence with her lover, who was the first to interrupt it. Their amours were maintained in despite of everybody, and, judging from the languid air and pale face of the *fiancée*, the nights, as Madame said, were not spent in weeping.

The Grand-Duchess of Florence had left her husband there and her duchy to return to France in search of a knave whom she loved; I have been told he was a sacristan. She preferred her sacristan and a modest pension, which was not paid her by her Grand-Duke, to all Italy, not excepting the Holy See. Pray what had Italy done to her? She despised it so heartily that Madame prevented her from seeing Mademoiselle de Valois before her departure. The Grand-Duchess was delighted, for, as she said, "If the new Princess of Modena commits a folly, a thing of which I think her most capable, they will not fail to attribute it to my advice, and her aunt, the Grand-Duchess, will become responsible for her conduct. I prefer not to see her; I am too frank to persuade her to Italianise herself; let her make a child

or two, and they will not stand in the way of her return to Paris."

The ceremony of the betrothal and the signing of the contract took place before the King in the month of February; Valois was to set off two days later. Her betrothal resembled an interment. The Prince of Modena's presents, however, were no paltry ones, for a little princeling as he was; the handsomest part of them was not his own portrait, which a garnishment of diamonds could not embellish; this made Richelieu say that it was doubtless the sign of the jeweller. This witticism did not amuse Mademoiselle de Valois, whose sole nourishment for the last three days had been tears. The cry escaped her:

"The Valois are never happy! Italy has always been baneful to them!"*

She delayed her signature to the last moment, and cast down her pen upon her name in such a fashion that it left a blot of ink.

"It is nothing," she said, with a laugh; "my signature wears mourning for me."

"What will the husband wear?" I asked of Guémené, the friend of Richelieu.

It might have been a betrothal of the dead.

The Chevalier d'Orléans had to escort her to Italy, and do honour to his title of General of the Galleys; but his sister had vowed to God and Richelieu that she would not travel yet. She went to say farewell to the Abbesse of Chelles, who had had the measles, which she caught, and thought of being laid in Saint-Denis rather than of starting for Modena. Two letters from Richelieu were better remedies than the prescriptions of Hippocrates. A third letter fell into the hands of Madame, who was so indignant that we were led to fear an attack of apoplexy.

"It was all very well," said she, "when my grand-daughter was still playing with her doll; but now she is Princess of Modena, and Richelieu would make at least one Valois more if the marriage fell through by his fault. But by the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne, let him dare to try!"

She wrote to the Duc, forbidding him to come near her granddaughter if he did not want to be hunted down like a wolf.

The *fiancée*, barely convalescent, recovered her colour and her

* She doubtless alluded to Henri II and his three sons, victims of their mother, Catherine de Medici.

gaiety, then set off on her journey under the conduct of her natural brother. At their departure there was kissing and weeping, and an exchange of farewells and good wishes. The Regent accompanied his last remaining daughter as far as Longjumeau, and would have followed her to her destination, if Madame had not sent in pursuit of him. The separation was only a sorrowful one on his side. I have always believed that Richelieu, in disguise, had enrolled himself in the suite of the Princess, and his manner of defence, when I declared my suspicions to him, only served to confirm them. The strongest proof, to my mind, is that the journey would not have been so prolonged if he had not been there. Neither can I otherwise explain his absence from Paris at that season. Italians are right to be jealous as—Italians. Whilst we waited for news from Modena, there came a piteous letter from the bridegroom asking his wife of the echoes, and in a mighty hurry to see her in his little realm. It was thus we discovered the peregrinations of the Princess, who, according to the epigram of the Grand-Duchess of Florence, wished to see everything except her husband; she had written to her father, who had not revealed it, that she intended to visit the whole of Provence, down to the least cockle-shell. The Duc d'Orléans also conceived a suspicion that only the Duc de Richelieu could take her so far afield.

"The man with four heads," said he, "is as mad as any other man with only one."

"The Duc de Conflans, Monseigneur, is doing penance in some corner."

"Precisely; he must be on a pilgrimage to Sainte-Baume."

Meanwhile, His Highness wrote, in the language of an incensed father, to his daughter, to hasten and meet her husband, who was awaiting her incognito at Genoa.

Suddenly, Richelieu reappeared at the Palais-Royal.

"Whence come you, Monsieur?" asked the Regent.

"I swear, not from the Bastille, Monseigneur."

As his arrival in Paris forecast that of the Princess at Modena, there was no attempt made to discover his traces.

Before any news was received from the bride, the Grand-Duchess of Tuscany, whose epigrams were admirable, prophesied in these terms: "In the days of the Regency, not ours, but that of the Queen-Mother, when the Prince de Condé and his brother

the Prince de Conti were sent to the Bastille, the latter asked for an *Imitation of Jesus Christ*; the Prince de Condé, amused at this piety, asked for an *Imitation of the Duc de Beaufort*, who had just left the Bastille; as for our Princess of Modena, when she is thoroughly nauseated with Italy, she will ask for an Imitation of the Grand-Duchess to return to France."

As a matter of fact, she wrote volumes to everybody, after her grandmother's example, and the whole Court echoed with her complaints; her letters had for sole refrain: "I am bored to extinction!" His Highness gave me the particulars of her nuptial night; it was like to give me my death of laughing: Grécourt would make a fine story out of it. The next day the Prince was more delighted than she had given him any cause to be.

"Fie on you!" she said, "can you be so ill bred as to love your wife like a tradesman in the Cité? At Paris, you would be mocked at."

"Why should one marry then?" asked the unhappy husband.

"To get children when one is able to get them."

None the less, he succeeded in taming her, and she admitted in her third letter that her Prince had human qualities, and that they would get on together. His Highness was afraid of some imprudence on the part of Richelieu, and wished him to give up the letters and portraits of Mademoiselle de Valois in his possession; but Richelieu swore so loudly that he had returned them all, that he made a semblance of believing him; I did not, knowing him too well to deem that he would ever despoil himself of his amorous genealogy, as he called it; he looks upon them as standards captured from the enemy.

Richelieu divulged an adventure which should have sufficed to convince me that he was a fellow-traveller of the bride; he was even careless enough to put himself in the place of the narrator. Salvatico, the envoy of the Prince of Modena, was a madman, whose whole person suggested the burlesque. The choice of such a favourite was not to his master's honour. He had a face a foot long, stuck upon a crane's neck; he did not walk, he popped; he bowed to the very ground, and spoke, from the depths of his belly, a sorry French dialect enough, more Gascon than Italian. He was presented to Mademoiselle de Valois one morning when she was stretched upon the sofa, with one leg, almost naked,

hanging down; this leg filled his thoughts till the next day, and he fell in love with it. The Prince of Modena was set on fire by the perusal of his envoy's letters. His *fiancée* let him sigh as long as he liked; and Madame, who, like everybody else, remarked Salvatico's condition, was annoyed at it, and begged her granddaughter to conciliate him, because he might bring reports to the Prince of the nature of Mademoiselle de Valois' reputation. The latter stood on no ceremony with him, and his mouth was closed; indeed, he redoubled his eulogies, with each fresh fact he learned concerning her. Salvatico was her second shadow; he escorted her to her bed-chamber, and passed one night outside her door. Everyone made fun of the poor ninny; ladies made declarations to him, which he took as seriously meant, and which he repulsed with horror. I kept him for two days in the seclusion of his apartment, because I had had him warned to be on his guard, as Madame de Polignac wanted to run away with him. He complained to the Regent, who promised him a safe conduct. Finally, Mademoiselle de Valois was not yet ten leagues from Paris before he declared himself, in the presence of a maid-of-honour, whom Richelieu did not name, but who might very well have been himself.

"Ah, ah! Madame," said he.

"What is it?" asked the Princess.

"Ah, ah, ah! My dear lady!"

"What do you mean with all these *ah, ahs*?"

The maid-of-honour said to him, in good plain French: "Rogue, if you had your deserts I would cut off your two ears!"

The only revenge of the Princess was to make a butt of him, and, under the pretext of a rendezvous, she kept him up and about all the night. . . .

I have just left His Royal Highness, whom I found in the company of three new female figures, one blonde, another dark, the third auburn. It made me reflect that did I not hasten to write down a list of the Regent's mistresses I should forget more than half of them. They are already more numerous than all the young ladies of the Court, who are no tigresses to anybody, least of all to the Regent. 'Tis not that he deserves, by his personal attractions, to play the Adonis at the age of forty-eight: "*Good-bye to the baskets, the vintage is over!*" He is no longer even the shadow of what he was under the name and in the dress of M. Lucas. How times have changed!

Madame de Parabère, whom the Regent still loves by fits and starts, after a habit, if not a constancy, of eight years, had been of great assistance in ridding me of Mademoiselle de Sery, who had become an affected peacock in becoming Comtesse d' Argenton. She read romances night and day, and wished to live them after the fashion of the shepherds of Astrea; she slept upon a sofa painted like grass, and in a room representing trees and sheep-folds; then, when the Regent arrived, she would softly recite to him verses from the Eclogues of Fontenelle, would talk of *tender flames*, the *sensitive heart*, and dish up all the mawkishness of the operas. His Royal Highness was disgusted by this diet of gallant speeches; he had not been brought up to fall at a woman's feet and coo his love in turtle-dove fashion. As I have said, he dismissed his shepherdess countess, and gave himself partially to the Parabère; I know not one of them who possessed him altogether. Before knowing him, Madame de Parabère had been, or passed for being, virtuous; she had not profited in the school of her mother, Madame de La Vieuville, lady-in-waiting to Madame de Berri; and when she married M. de Parabère, she thought, it was said, that children were made in the ear-hole. Her husband was indifferent to everything, save what bore upon gluttony or drunkenness, but credulous as any clown of Paris. His wife yielded to the example set her; at the suppers in the Luxembourg, she was known as the *Barrel*, because, glass in hand, she would rival the most insatiable tipplers; but she did not keep her head long, and was slow to recover. I have mentioned that the Regent taught her the art of adding a further love to the love of wine.

Shortly before the Regency, he gave a great nocturnal gala, at which Parabère and his wife assisted. The latter intoxicated the Duc d' Orléans with her glances, and that without prejudice to the wine he drank to screw up his courage. He felt in a fitting humour to lead the dance; all the guests, both men and women, were heavy with the fumes of the banquet. I was the only Cato capable of reading without spectacles. Parabère was without sight or hearing; Madame de Parabère being seated next to the Prince, the moment was favourable.

"Dubois," said His Highness, "have Parabère carried to a bed."

"Which bed?"

"Not my wife's, scurvy questioner."

"But, Monseigneur, the poor man could drink another five or six bottles."

"No; I have an interest in looking after his precious health; take him away and put him to bed."

I went up to Parabère, and cried: "Heavens! how pale you are! Can you be ill?"

"I!"

"Unless it is I who have something wrong with my eyes."

"To be sure," said the others, "Parabère is ill."

"Yes," interposed Madame de Parabère, "my poor husband is very far from well."

"His pulse is terribly agitated," I added.

"He must be carried into a room and put to bed," went on the Duc d'Orléans, in the same tones.

"He is fainting," I cried; and, making a sign to the lackeys, I had him carried on to the Prince's bed. The latter followed us, as well as the worthy Madame de Parabère, who feigned anxiety. The drunkard opened eyes that were as bright as basilisks, and made no resistance; I undressed him and put him to bed. I know not at what hour his wife rejoined him; but in the morning he found her lying conjugally at his side, full of admiration for the hospitality of the Duc d'Orléans; and, as blessings come when we sleep, Parabère was richer than he had been the night before, by a huge diamond, worth three thousand louis and something else. The diamond was a present destined for Madame d'Orléans, who did not forgive this larceny in favour of her husband's "little black crow"; this was the name she had bestowed on Madame de Parabère. The lady sought for some invention to account for the origin of the diamond; she went coaxingly to her husband, who was now only half drunk; she asked him adroitly for a few louis to buy some trinkets which were being offered her at such a low price, that so fine an opportunity might not occur again. Parabère, with a drunkard's generosity, drained his purse to content his wife. The lady had no sooner obtained the sum than she flaunted her diamond before all the society of the Palais-Royal. Madame d'Orléans had a pang of heart-ache when she saw the ring on Madame de Parabère's finger.

"That is an admirable stone," she said, thinking to embarrass her; "where did you get it?"

"My husband gave it me," replied the Parabère, drily.

"He makes you *princely* presents," went on the Duchesse in the same tone.

"Oh! Madame," retorted the Parabère, "it cost us extremely little."

"I very much doubt it, Madame," interrupted Madame d'Orléans.

"Between a hundred and two hundred louis," said the husband innocently.

"You do not tell us all," cried the Princess; "that diamond is worth at least three thousand louis."

"Madame," replied Parabère, turning to his wife, "I was right in maintaining you had made a good bargain."

The laughers were in clover; and the least perspicacious guessed what Madame de Parabère had paid for her ring.

This lady is beginning to age, although she is not yet old; but ever since her first child she has been fading day by day; no one does as she does with impunity. Her husband died of indigestion; since then she has been able to accept diamonds without keeping up appearances. She was incessantly with the Duchesse de Berri, who treated her like a sister. She did not content herself with the Regent only, who did not content himself with her; the ever-green Nocé was the most assiduous of her gallants. It was no fault of hers that he was not exiled. To obtain his pardon, she forcibly entered the Prince's bed; but she was so ambitious and rapacious that my threats made her change her key. I told her very frankly, that if she was anxious to rejoin Nocé, I would be enchanted to procure her that little pleasure; she held her tongue and remained. She was only cruel with those who asked nothing from her. With her I adopted the saying of the Bible: *Petite et accipietis.* I even received the interest on the principal, for in the Regent's presence she dared to give me a blow. I was at that time Archbishop of Cambrai.

"Madame," I said in anger, "I thought with us it was the Archbishops who confirmed."

"You are not an Archbishop."

"What am I then, my sweet?"

"You are called Dubois in the fish-market; here we give you your true name."

The quarrel flamed out; I was trembling for my eyes, for they are the mark of women who have nails. The Regent made peace between us. The honourable lady was not exempt from the reproaches that were heaped on me. Our reconciliation was sealed with an embrace. Has it not been said, somewhere or other, "A kingdom divided against itself will not stand."

Parabère was dark, bronzed even like a Spanish woman; her locks of a raven blackness fell in waves to her garters; she did them up into soft and shiny pyramids. She is small and slender, with grace itself in her most brusque movements. Her eyes have a life-giving fire, like the rays of the sun stolen by Prometheus. They are adorable eyes, large and well-set, with lashes of a rare length, and perfectly designed eyebrows. Her nose was seducing before she deformed it by dint of fouling it with snuff. Her mouth, adorned with pearly teeth, has been ruined, and her lips have acquired a violet tint. The amount of intelligence she has will not kill her. His Royal Highness got on excellently with her, "because," said he, "I have no love of those clacking women who talk like books. Parabère pleases me almost by her silence, because she has nothing to say." However, whether because they were put in her mouth, or that wit came to her by fits and starts, I know some excellent remarks attributed to her.

"The Regent," said she, at a supper party, "is a combination of King David and King Solomon: he plays every sort of instrument; he dances, not before the Ark, but everywhere; he eats and drinks, and amuses himself, and takes no thought of the morrow. I will add that, unlike Solomon, he has not seven hundred concubines."

"What is the use of piling up treasure you cannot use?" retorted the Prince; "I should have more than seven hundred had I the wherewithal to occupy them. In revenge, I have no Bathsheba like David."

"Nay, you forget, Monseigneur," interrupted Richelieu, "that if I am not yet dead, like Urias, it is not your fault."

The joke was a little bitter, and if, amongst the female guests, Richelieu had not been able to count three mistresses, he would have paid dearly for an unreasonable comparison.

I will not dwell upon Mesdames de Nesle, Polignac, Guébriant, and a host of others, who have not paid tribute to the Regent alone; it came to such a point that one might have gone out in

search of a man at the Palais-Royal, like Diogenes in the streets of Athens. The amusing thing, to my mind, is that Richelieu was always the advance-guard in the Prince's amours, as though he had gone out to reconnoitre the ground. Thus, at each new escapade of His Highness, he used to say: "A year, two, three years ago, I was as happy as the Regent! It is I who plucked the corn in the blade!"

Madame de Sabran did not succeed to Madame de Parabère, the *inevitable*, but was, for some months, a rival with her in the good graces of the Duc d'Orléans, who had always one on his right and the other on his left hand. Madame de Sabran professed to be a native of Provence; but I think she rather came in a direct line from La Fillon's establishment. Her husband was a man who could be led by the nose and ears, which were of an Arcadian vastness; otherwise, a worthy gentleman. "Ah, gentlemen," said the Regent, "honour is not there where it is woman's pleasure to place it!" However, as Sabran, determined to see his wife somebody's mistress, preferred to fix upon a Prince of the Blood, he deserves more reproach than his wife, if he deserves any, which is hypothetical. Madame de Sabran is a sort of excellent wench, with no other merit than her great beauty, no other virtue than her inconstancy, no other talent than that of pleasing those who see her. An air of effrontery, bold eyes: this is what turned the head of His Highness; she does not talk, but sows sentences in a pretty Gascon accent, which brings back to me my old acquaintances of Bordeaux. The resemblance is exact in the matter of expressions, which one is astonished to hear fall from cherry lips. To swear would be a small matter; but she employs the language of places of ill-fame, dirty epithets, which I am weak enough to like, and which made Madame de Berri explode with laughter. The Regent took a pleasure in answering her in the same tone, and the things the two together said would put the paper to the blush. Come, Dubois, my dear Cardinal, you are become almost an honest man, for Diogenes has said that red was the colour of virtue: to wit, the hats of Cardinals.

I refrained from having the least relation with Madame de Sabran, who would have treated me, according to her own expression, like a lackey or a Prince of the Blood; she declared that these two extremes were fashioned out of the same mud.

She neglected no means, however, of obtaining presents of money and jewels. It is thus, with an audacity beyond all conception, she obtained for her most honourable husband the post of Chamberlain. The scene was burlesque in the extreme. The Regent, who had passed the night with La Souris, the dancing-girl, had barricaded his door; for I know not whether I have related in these memoirs the dread he had of being disturbed, while closeted with his loves. He had so often repeated to me, in answer to my reproaches as to his prodigality, that at certain moments one could obtain anything from him, even the impossible, that I put it to the test in order to obtain the mitre of the Archbishop of Cambrai. Sabran was doubtless aware of this foible of His Royal Highness, for at an early hour she went and knocked at the Prince's door; it was all in vain. Her shouts were no more successful. She went away like a she-wolf who has been robbed of her cubs. I was at the audience of His Highness, when M. de Sabran arrived, with the shyness of a seminarist, holding a letter from his wife in form of recommendation.

"How is Madame de Sabran?" asked the Prince.

"Monseigneur," replied the husband, "she is gone to confession."

"Take care, M. de Sabran, that she does not tell our sins instead of her own."

"Ah, Monseigneur, the confessor is one of my friends." He delivered his letter, and the Regent read it, and choked with laughter.

"What is the matter, Monseigneur," cried Sabran, pretending to be surprised; "have I made a mistake in the paper? Show me, if you please. . . ."

"No; it is no use; I was laughing at the annoyance M. de Lambert will feel; he is soliciting the post of Chamberlain of my household; I give it to you."

"To me, Monseigneur!"

"Faith? Not to Madame de Sabran."

"What goodness!"

"We are under no obligation to each other, I assure you."

When M. de Sabran had departed, as joyously as possible, His Highness handed me the letter, which I have preserved as a curiosity. Here it is, slightly modified:

"I went to you this morning, my thoroughbred; your door

was shut to me; if ever you visit me, you will have the same fate. I would sooner sleep all my life with M. de Sabran than once with you, old libertine. Dare you reply? But you can neither love nor write. If you can read, read this. I am sending you my lout of a husband; make a Chamberlain of him, since you have made him a cuckold."*

I find it a pretty jest that the husband should have been made the bearer of this missive. Nevertheless, in spite of these insults, Madame de Sabran had signed a treaty of peace with this *thoroughbred*, long before the sun was up, which rose before they did.

The Duc d' Orléans, faithful to my principles, put a great value on the dancing-girls of the Opera, who would have sold father and mother to him. His Highness seldom went behind the scenes, because all these girls were authorised to call him *Philippe*. Some busybody thought fit to give them a lesson in manners, and met with this reply:

"Really! How can one call a man one has seen at one's feet, *Monseigneur*?"

"Those devilish dancers," I cried, "think of nothing but their feet!"

Amongst the thousand and one goddesses whom the Prince treated as mortals, I have taken no notice of any but La Souris and Emilie. To fix the dates of all these gallant affairs would require a chronologist. I will speak of it to the author of the *Method of Studying History*, that rogue De Lenglet-Dufresnoy, agent of the Duchesse du Maine, a knave and a liar, who stole my money from me, at the time of the Cellamare conspiracy, under the pretext of revelations, which he never made. I will have him walled up alive in the Bastille. This miserable Abbé has everything that great lords lack, understanding and wit, but he will never be more than an Abbé and pamphleteer.

La Souris, *the mouse*, only bore that name on account of her nimbleness and charm; besides, she had a horror of rats and mice; so much so, that she had a miscarriage because her namesake once ran up her legs. She is a marvellous dancer, the darling of the pit, because, in her capers, she lets her skirt fly to the winds. She is graceful to her very finger-tips, and it is worth going twenty

* This letter struck me at first as a monstrous invention of Mercier; my astonishment was great when I found it among M. de Maurepas' manuscripts in the Bibliothèque du Roi. How a few lines depict an epoch! [*Editor's Note.*]

leagues to see her when she dances the minuet. Her face is nothing wonderful; everything is faulty; but in her small eyes and mouth, as in her little hands and feet, there is a pleasant promise which did not deceive the Regent. He carried her off from two or three men who had been enriched by Law's bank, and built a bridge of gold in order to take her to the house which Thevenart of the Opera had at Auteuil. Thevenart drew freely of the favours of the goddess, who would have let herself be seduced by a Satyr, rather than fall out of practice. La Souris flaunted so insolent a luxury, carriages, lackeys, and armorial bearings, that twenty discarded mistresses charged Richelieu with their vengeance. The latter chose the moment of a ball given by Thevenart at the Duc d'Orléans' expense. La Souris gorged herself with the pleasure of seeing so many embroidered coats prostrated in reverence before her; illuminations transformed the little house into an enchanted palace, and fireworks gave a fairy-like effect. Richelieu, who might have said, "good rat to the good cat," decoyed La Souris into a thicket, threw himself at her feet, made her a declaration, in order to give his people time to open a little gate where a phaeton was in waiting. La Souris, not knowing what was required of her, waited until she saw herself carried off by the light vehicle before she struggled and cried for aid against the ravisher. The countryside was deserted, and the Bois de Boulogne found the nymph in a better mood. She submitted, when there was no longer any remedy, to the temerities of the Duc, who crowned his work by taking his conquest to his Hôtel, where she spent the night in making fun of a Royal Highness. The *fête* of Auteuil received a disagreeable interruption; the Prince adopted a philosophical course: "They are wrong," he said, "in believing this girl was exhausting my health; my purse, perhaps; but I will have no more of this Opera food." Two days later, a love as keen began between him and Emilie, another dancing-girl, as voluptuous as a Circassian, from the Seraglio of Constantinople. Richelieu made no secret of his abduction; the Regent displayed no anger with him. It was thought that Mademoiselle de Valois had excused the impudence of her Duc; but, without seeking so far for what is near at hand, I imagine that the Duc d'Orléans was tired of La Souris, although not to such an extent as she was of him.

To La Souris succeeded Emilie, the greek statue of the Opera,

as Richelieu called her; he had not succeeded in lighting the least flame in her. The Regent, however, chilled as he was, was satisfied with this new mistress, who spoke little, listened as much as could be wished, had a hand ever open, and no will of her own. Emilie was tall, a real Minerva of Opera, without an apparent fault, and with a skin like white marble; she knew no such thing as jealousy, and if the Prince had lain with the whole universe, she would have only said to him: "Take your time; don't disturb yourself; I will wait." She made no demands, but accepted everything; she had more reading than most women of her condition, and quoted the histories of Rome and France. Richelieu had loved her; the Duc de Melun had loved her; Firmaçon loved her to madness, to fury; it was she who provided him with resources to keep up the princely expenditure he indulged in, even when he was a page; but, as Firmaçon was with the army of Spain, the Regent was not molested in his amours.

His Royal Highness had a singular esteem for Emilie, who gave him advice like the general of an army; the good wench cited Alcibiades and the elder Cato with the gravity of an Aulic counsellor. One morning I sent a request for a moment's conversation with the Duc d'Orléans, who granted me it at once, although he was in bed with a lady who was not Madame d'Orléans. I was but little embarrassed by these kinds of witnesses, who used to hide behind the curtains, whilst I spoke in a low voice of affairs; but this time the matter of which I had to treat was delicate, and more secret than if it had been a question of nominating me as Pope. I entered, however, with a majestic step, into the chamber in which the amorous exercises of the Regent were conducted. I saw the loveliest female form it were possible to behold, not excluding the houris of Mahomet. I was so dazzled that I hid my face in my hands, to collect my thoughts: I was not then Archbishop of Cambrai. "Look as much as you like, Dubois," said the Prince, "but let us talk of business." During this address, Emilie—for I recognised her face—neither moved nor closed her eyes; it was a picture worthy of Carlo Vanloo, or rather of my little Boucher, who does nudes so well.

"Pardon me, Monseigneur," I answered; "I am not wanted here; I will retire."

"I dare you to," cried the Prince, in a voice which brought me up short in a meditation; "Emilie, catch hold of his stock."

"I am no Potiphar's wife," replied the actress, "to seize the mantle of a new Joseph."

"But! Monseigneur," I went on, "I came on important business."

"Very well," said the Prince; "produce your important business."

"But, Monseigneur, I cannot in presence . . ."

"Proceed, nevertheless; our Emilie is discreet; she has wit and judgment, and has lain in the bosom of history; perhaps she will give us good advice."

"Does Philippe, then," said she, "think I have as much discretion as the youthful Papirius in the Roman Senate?"

"A plague on it!" cried the Regent, "who would believe that there is the learning of a Benedictine in it? Well, what brings you here at such an hour?"

"Monseigneur," I stammered, "I came to suggest to you . . ."

"Ask him what, Emilie."

"To suggest a mistress to you."

"Good! This deserves attention. Can she rival Emilie?"

"Monseigneur, I have not even been in a position to judge; but she has been recommended to me by Madame de Tencin; a pretty wit . . ."

"O Heaven! Pretty wits do not often inhabit pretty bodies."

"You will change your opinion in favour of Madame de Deffant, who, as yet, has played no part in politics."

"Ah! you call that a part in politics. What do you think of it, Emilie?"

"I think, Monseigneur," replied the philosophical dancing-girl, "that it does not cost much to go and see."

"I see that it costs you nothing; well, we will see."

I admired the indifference, whether real or assumed, of this courtesan, who advised her lover to have another mistress; it seems to me that, without troubling to go into the evidence of the case, I should have kept to Emilie.

She was no prude, and could only be compared with Laïs or Phryne; she loved money, and would have sold her soul to obtain it. In the course of an orgy, at which I was not present, the Prince said: "Gentlemen, are you aware that Emilie is the most beautiful woman of the Court?"

"Of the Opera, you mean to say?" answered Nocé, who favoured the Parabère.

"No; I maintain that she has not a rival, and I will prove it to you when you like."

"Monseigneur, tell these gentlemen that I was born, at the same time as Venus, from the foam of the sea."

"I accept the foam," said Nocé.

"Let he who has eyes see! Emilie, undo your dress, and take care not to drop the bank-notes."

There was no false shame; Emilie raised her dress to the level of her head, to receive the shower of paper which the Prince flung to her, before everyone's eyes. Emilie gained more than twenty thousand livres almost without a thought.

The Regent's love for this girl lasted for about six months, until Firmaçon returned from Spain more amorous than ever. He fell into a furious passion. "Strumpet," he cried, "since you have shared the leavings of the Parabère and the Sabran, I will make a *rouée* of you!" And he rained blows on her, and confined her in a convent at Charenton, where he mounted guard at the doors lest any one should approach his mistress. "I never run after a harlot," said the Regent to me, "but at the first opportunity I will send Firmaçon to the convent." And he had him confined in the Bastille for having, in the Tuileries, struck with his cane a gentleman who was reviling his name.

At this period, after Madame de Berri's death, the Regent passed for a monster, a devourer of human flesh, a drinker of blood. As a Cardinal cannot roam about the streets, I do not know whether this horrid opinion still prevails, but it was horribly inrooted in the people in 1720, as I had occasion to prove. Shortly after my elevation to the Archbishopric of Cambrai, I was forced to go incognito through the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. I was in the garb of a cit, and was delayed until nightfall. As I passed by a shop, I heard my name and that of the Regent pronounced to the tune of tears and gnashing of teeth; it was the mother of a family correcting her little boy and admonishing a daughter of eighteen.

"Wretch," she said to her son, "if you are not good, I will have you eaten up by the Were-wolf, Croquemitaine, or the Regent."

"What is the Regent?" asked the child.

"He is a demon, who will eat your heart, as easily as he would a thrush, and carry you off to Hell with him. As for you, baggage," she said to her daughter, "if you go out again at night, you will be carried off by some *Cambrai*." (Since my consecration, this was the name given to certain fish sold in the markets.)

"Good mother," replied the girl, "you frighten me with Dubois and the Regent, just as if I were ten years old."

"You will see, unhappy girl, these incarnate devils will carry you off."

"Not to Hell, I hope?"

"No; but to the Luxembourg, where they cut women in pieces; to the Palais-Royal, where they worship Satan in the form of a ram; to Saint-Cloud . . ."

"Bah, mother! I have seen the Regent at the Opera, and, I assure you, he is not as ugly as my cousin, whom they want to make me marry."

"I repeat it; it is your destiny; the Duc d'Orléans will make a lost girl of you, and I shall die of grief."

This dialogue reminded me of the fable of the wolf, the mother, and the child, and I hastened to make off for fear of being recognised. There would have been a cry of "Wolf." On the morrow, however, having related my adventure to the Regent, who laughed boisterously at it, the whim seized him to see this girl. She was brought to him; she was not ugly, and I think she was not dissatisfied with the two days she spent with a Prince of the Blood.

Madame de Deffant obtained what she wished from His Highness; but I repented of the negotiation. The Deffant did not even thank me for what I had done for her, although I had been inclined to do more; she merely said to Madame de Tencin: "My dear, your Archbishop never told me that I should have to put up with competition; there are five or six of them scrambling for the pieces." This lady, who had been very young when she married the Marquis de Deffant, was very young when she began to enjoy life and her beauty; I did not, however, like her cat-like face, with its curved nose, her bird's mouth, and the two gleaming and expressionless eyes which might have been made of glass. She called herself a philosopher, because she did not believe in virtuous women, as though that

had been an article of faith. La Fillon has the same philosophy. The de Deffant, moreover, adds practice to theory; any one more frankly shameless I do not know. She surrounds herself with learned men, song-writers, poets, and academicians; she devotes herself to the interests of all the wits. The Regent was disgusted as soon as he had tasted her; did she not wish to uphold a thesis against him, as to whether Arouet or Lamothe was the greater genius? His Highness replied *ad rem* to this blue-stocking, but he could not quite get rid of her without her leaving him one of her pupils, Madame d'Averne, by whose name he still swears, as they swore of old by Styx. It must be quite understood that, during all these relations, the former mistresses retained many of their attributes; thus he had to exile the Parabère in order that he might cease having her on his hands, and in his bed, in spite of himself.

Madame d' Averne, whose reign came to an end last year, was, is, and always will be, a master mind; she plays the prude to the world, and the first time she received the Duc d'Orléans, she said to him, as she pushed him away: "Monseigneur, let me make my prayer to God." Madame de Deffant, although younger, surpassed herself in this education. Madame d' Averne, before she knew her, had been no more respectful of her husband's authority; Richelieu, as usual, had preceded His Royal Highness in this lady's intimacy. She had the carriage of a Queen of Sheba; she was imposing rather than beautiful, well-made rather than graceful; her expression was inert, lacking in animation, her eyes were false and changeable; her cheeks pale; but she had, to the lover's eye, a mighty attractive bust. I see that I am speaking of all these ladies in the past tense, as though they were all dead; but, thank God! they are alive, and will outlive me, I suppose; but one may say of a woman who has lived hard for a period of six years, that she is somewhat on the wane, and this until she has quite passed away. I return to Madame d'Averne; may the Regent not imitate me there! She is skilled in acquiring, and the Treasury was not rid of her for less than three millions. Her husband esteems himself, if not highly honoured, at least greatly enriched by his wife's dishonour. His Royal Highness was wrong in letting himself be subjugated and tyrannised over by this princess, who would fain draw up a lease, as though it had been a question of a country house. She

would have liked to rout all the mistresses, past, present, and to come, as she had exiled the Parabère, who had only said that Madame d' Averne smelt of sulphur. She could not endure that Madame de Sabran should sit in a box at the Opera with the Duc d' Orléans; she eased her bile in little epigrams as sour as a serpent's saliva. In despair, one night, at seeing the Regent at such close quarters with Madame de Sabran, that all the spectators believed she had once more become mistress-in-chief, Madame d' Averne said loudly:

"If I had the misfortune to lose the favour of His Royal Highness, I should appear no more in the world."

"You might reappear anywhere," retorted Madame de Sabran, "and be quite sure of not being noticed."

What Madame d'Averne feared to lose was the allowance of three livres a month for her table, and the little occasional perquisites:

> " Elle aurait du Régent emporté les serviettes,
> Plutôt que de rentrer au logis les mains nettes." *

Her egoism was apparent in her least actions, as in all her more natural remarks. One day, Chirac, the doctor of lugubrious prophecies, said to the Prince:

"Monseigneur, you will die of apoplexy."

"Find me a more pleasant death, if you can."

"Yes; but you will probably die in a woman's arms."

"Better still, my friend."

"Ah! Gracious God! Philippe!" cried Madame d' Averne, "do not give me such a terrible fright; I should be ill for a fortnight afterwards."

This consummate prude had a lover, however, the Marquis d' Alincourt, who recks little of having a rival, so long as his share is not diminished thereby. He is a pretty, curled gentleman; his mirror has taught him too much; he is great at the chase, and the ladies confess it. It is mighty comical to hear him babble, in terms of venery: "I am going to *bag* Madame de Châtillon," said this triple fop; "I shall make something tender out of her." He had a complete rupture with Madame d' Averne, because she did not invite him to a *fête* the Regent was giving in his house

* She would have ta'en his napkins any day,
Rather than empty-handed go away.

at Saint-Cloud. The next day he met her at the ball, and reproached her bitterly in the style of Nimrod.

"I could not," she replied; "Philippe had forbidden me."

"Well, go to your paymaster!" said d'Alincourt, and turned his back on her.

Madame d'Averne, scandalised to the bottom of her soul, hastened to complain to His Highness and her husband. The Regent only laughed, remarking: "After all, he is right." The husband took more offence than anyone; he wished to kill d'Alincourt, for he is Colonel of a regiment of the King, and, if not brave, he wears a sword. This worthy M. d'Averne suffered from epileptic fits, and his anger brought one on, in the middle of the ball; this was sufficiently diverting. When he recovered his senses, he found the Duc d'Orléans discharging the offices of a sister-of-charity to him.

"Monseigneur," said he, *grossomodo*, "permit me to employ my regiment as a guard for my wife, and I swear to you that nobody shall go near her but your Highness."

In revenge, d'Alincourt made a parade of the letters and trinkets he had received from Madame d'Averne, and her fidelity, with which she used to cover herself as with a shield of adamant, received the rudest shock. His Royal Highness scoffed at this virtue, which had both a lover and a *paymaster*.

This list of acknowledged mistresses is, doubtless, incomplete, especially if one were to search for the heroines of a host of gallant adventures which were all alike in their *dénouement*. The reigning dynasty of these ladies is governed by Madame de Falaris, who is more depraved than all others put together. Her husband commenced her education, and others after him have had a hand in it. His Highness always calls her his *tyrant*, in allusion, no doubt, to Phalaris of Syracuse. This lady, if I am to believe those who are in a position to judge, is capable of killing those whom she renders happy. Recently, the Prince was suffering from distressing humours, and Chirac, as the result of a consultation, took Madame de Falaris aside and said to her, with the air of a sibyl:

"Madame, it only rests with you to deprive us of our Regent."

"What? M. Chirac, you are jesting."

"Madame, a man who sees the great and small die daily has no wish to jest."

"But, once more, tell me what must be done?"

"My advice is that it would be best if nothing were done."

The Duc d' Orléans came to put an end to Chirac's confidences.

"My dear doctor," said he, "if I were to believe you, I should neither eat nor drink. . . ."

"It is a question of your life, that is all."

"Better death than . . . besides," he added, turning to me, "I am easy; Stairs predicted, by means of the three glasses of water, that Dubois would die a year before me. Try and postpone the prediction, my dear Dubois."

"Ah, Monseigneur, thank me for having submitted to treatment!!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

DUBOIS' MISTRESS, MADAME DE TENCIN—THE RED HAT AND THE ARCHBISHOP—THE REGENT'S RESISTANCE—LETTER FROM THE KING OF ENGLAND—MAROY'S EXPEDITION—THE ARCHBISHOP'S WIFE—SHE VISITS MADAME—DUBOIS' POLYGAMY—EPIGRAMS AGAINST DUBOIS—HIS ORDINATION—NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE RED HAT—THE TWO CONSECRATIONS

THE sorriest of painters will paint the portrait of his mistress; Madame de Tencin, in every respect, merits that I should paint her as she is, and not as she was; for nothing has yet passed away from her. If, instead of having been adorned with a Cardinal's hat, a crown had fallen upon my head, I would offer to share it with her; but in the Church these partitions are not allowed. She is content then, this divine dame, to do the honours of my Archbishopric, which is held in the Palais-Royal.

"My dear colleague," said Massillon, "you are Archbishop through the love of God!"

"And the love of Madame de Tencin. I know that it is mighty ridiculous to be in love at my age, in my state of health and political position; however, I no longer understand by love what I did of old."

Madame de Tencin, who has buried that good Abbé de Louvois, has doubtless been the sustenance of certain honest folk who were capable of supporting the *régime* of a pretty woman. I know not what I am become, but I take myself to task for being jealous of ancient history, for, as for modern, there is no vulnerable place. The conduct of Madame de Tencin is a flint which breaks the teeth of calumny. Methinks that in her eyes there is something of eternal beatitude. These eyes, which have made me commit so many follies, are not those of a Raphael virgin; they have a malice as lively as words; they say all they wish—it is saying much,—and voluptuousness is tempered in them with sense. Her figure is elegant, tall, and, withal, slightly stooping, the result, she says, of her original vocation as a nun, when she was more often than not on her knees; her face is round, with a

little clear-cut nose, cheeks of the deepest crimson, teeth of pearl, in a mouth somewhat largely moulded, but always half opened in an appetising smile. She is reproached with having a neck an ell long, but it is so supple that it is perfectly graceful. I could extend my description from the known to the unknown, but I am too much the Archbishop to reveal what should be hidden, and gauze is a mundane invention not tolerated by the canons of the Church. Richelieu, who is a good judge on such matters, has said, without flattery, that Madame de Tencin has the gift of pleasing four persons, an archbishop, a banker, a duke, and a Prince of the Blood. He did not speak thus without a hidden meaning; but I confused him by replying that of those four persons, the archbishop alone pleased Madame de Tencin. As for qualities of heart and mind, there are none lacking to this lady; she excels in maintaining herself in a becoming position at Court; she asks for nothing, everything is accorded her. She undertook, for instance, to push on her brother in the ecclesiastical career with her secular hands; she has already made of a prior of the Sorbonne an abbé of Vézelay, who is no poorer in spirit than in purse, in the Gospel's despite. This brother is a libertine, capable or guilty of disgraceful acts; and if they would believe me, they would send him to Italy, where he need not be at the pains to amend his ways. Madame de Tencin is much attached to me, and I am no less so to her. I have no doubts as to her disinterestedness, since I had the proof of it, when she rejected Law's millions and was content to make money out of the bank. Some day I will make a will in her favour; for my idiot of a brother would not know how to spend an income of a hundred thousand livres. I have succeeded in making him a director of roads and bridges, even a secretary of the King's cabinet; but he always bewrays the apothecary to such a degree that I despair of washing him any cleaner.

Madame de Tencin, who had at that date, as she has to-day, the management of my household, which was accomplished, if not without economy, yet with dazzling luxury, grieved that I was not a Cardinal, like Richelieu and Mazarin, my models. It was not, however, that I was chary of efforts, money, or presents. Père Lafiteau, whose portrait I have drawn,* in all

* The manuscript contains no mention of Père Lafiteau previous to this passage.

his crusted Jesuitry, was working at the Court of Rome, less in my interests than in his own. He had talked loudly of procuring me the scarlet at small expense, but during the several years he was in the vicinity of the Papal throne he obtained nothing for me but promises. The more impatient Madame de Tencin became to see my head more warmly covered, the more I redoubled my applications, letters, and presents, to win over the Holy Father and the Cardinals. I got the Chevalier de Saint-Georges on my side; he undertook to serve me with all his power, which was but moderate, on condition that I would assist him with money. Cardinal Alberoni, the Pope's nephew, also promised more than he fulfilled, and amid all these guarantees and hopes, I was what might be called bareheaded between two hats. I gave vent to sighs and cries of rage, which ought to have been heard across the mountains, and, in order to move the inflexible Clement XI, I was always casting in his face the bull *Unigenitus*, at which, at heart, I mocked as at Colin-Tampon. Père Lafiteau was the sole ambassador of France at Rome, although Cardinal de la Trémouille, Archbishop of Cambrai, bore the title. This cursed Jesuit gave himself airs of huge importance, and he would have addressed me paternal exhortations for the reform of my manners and my religion, if I had not told him, once for all, to return to Paris, in the event of the hat, which had been given to M. de Mailly, not proving sufficiently elastic to cover the head of the Abbé Dubois. . . . The reply, which I expected to be decisive, was only a makeshift. Lafiteau, making himself as important as an angry cat, and as full of condolences as a funeral oration, had further demands upon my purse for the benefit of the Cardinal nephew, who solicited a present of books, pictures, medals, and antiquities; this devil of a letter was a bill of exchange for twenty thousand livres, payable at sight. I was tempted to wish the hat at the devil, with the Pope's leeches as well; but a postscript, which was but one snare the more, furnished me with the means of barring their retreat. Lafiteau gave me his word, in the name and authority of his Holiness, that the first vacant hat should be mine, provided, he added, with an Ignatian reservation, that by that time I had been nominated bishop or archbishop. "Faith!" I cried, with inspiration, "I will submit to anything they wish, even to a

diocese, in order to attain the red hat." Madame de Tencin, who, after her morning custom, came to hear the news of my health, filled me with a passion for the crozier and mitre.

"I do not consider the revenues of a bishopric," she said, "so much as the honours to which it is the stepping-stone. I vow to you that I would still be a Canoness, if I had any chance of becoming a 'Popess.'"

"Wait for that until I am Pope. But I see an obstacle to these lofty projects."

"What obstacle?"

"My retention of urine and my marriage."

"'Heaven is to be arranged with,'" she quoted.

"Nor is that all—the bishopric?"

"Have one founded in the Mississippi."

"Certainly it would be an ingenious means of excusing myself from residence."

Meanwhile, I was thinking very seriously of making myself an Archbishop, since I could not make myself a Cardinal; Madame de Tencin was the only confidant of a plan which seemed an enormous contradiction to my reputation; I was very careful not to inform Lafiteau, who was delighted, as I had guessed, at having discouraged me. However, I persisted in my attempt to win over the Pope completely to my institution; I repaid him in his own coinage with frivolous promises; at the same time I was preparing the Prince for my unexpected request. I had little doubt but that the demand of a prelacy from me would seem a good joke to him; I remembered that at a supper in the Luxembourg, when his head was clouded with wine, he said to me with an expansive tenderness calculated to inspire me with confidence:

"Dubois, ask me what you like; if it be the half of my fortune, you shall have it."

"Very well, Monseigneur," I answered, "I will answer you as I did Louis XIV; make me a Cardinal."

"Do you mean it, Abbé?"

"Certainly, I mean it; and if you do not mean it, I shall be careful to remind you of it."

"The only red hat you deserve is a jester's cap."

"Monseigneur, do not deprive yourself of yours. I am not so bald but that I can go bare-headed."

On the eve of the 1st of January 1720, I went, according to custom, to offer His Highness my good wishes for the New Year.

"Thanks, Dubois," said the Prince, who was counting out bank-notes; "we are old friends, as I am ready to prove to you in whatever fashion pleases you best."

"In that case, Monseigneur, let your memory make an effort."

"No, Abbé, you must respect yourself if you would be respected; you can never with cope or mitre or red hat destroy the old Adam—that is to say, the Abbé Dubois."

"Ah, Monseigneur, there is somebody, who is not as good as I, who is destroying everybody."

"Are you speaking of Law? He is a brave and honest Scotchman! We shall end by converting him."

"It would cost you no more to make two conversions instead of one. I wish to return to the bosom of religion."

"I only hope religion may return to your bosom! But I do not advise you to change your title of Abbé."

"I shall not do so cheaply."

"Here are some *billets doux* to give you patience until you die."

"Monseigneur, I accept always, ready to give back again."

They were New Year's gifts from the King or Law, a million in shares and bank-notes, and over a hundred thousand livres of ready money with which to win others in the Rue Quincampoix. I asked nothing better for the moment, and if I did not forget the bishopric, I had the appearance of doing so.

On the morning of the 1st of January, while Madame de Tencin was occupied in wishing me a happy year, accompanied by many others, as the song says, a dispatch from Rome was handed me; I abandoned everything to open it, and I leapt with joy, crying: "The Archbishop of Cambrai is dead."

The Bishop of Sisteron brought me this unhoped for news, begging me to propose him as a successor to the Cardinal de la Trémouille. The rogue whom I had picked up when he was a beggar without a sou, had made me fool enough to lend a hand to his advancement; it was high time for me to work for myself.

"What are you going to do?" said Madame de Tencin, who was directress of my conscience.

"Whatever you think right."

"It is no question of that, but of what is the surest and most expeditious plan; go and find the Regent."

"He is engaged."

"In what manner?"

"Ask the lady who is in his company."

"How do you know that?"

"How can it be otherwise on a New Year's day?"

"I see—it is who is to have the gift!"

"Faith! let us arrange that it shall be me."

"You have often told marvels of the good-humoured moments of his Royal Highness."

"To be sure; I know certain persons of your sex who have found them also."

"Well, make haste, insist on entering his bed-chamber, and sell your withdrawal dearly."

This disinterested advice deserved to be followed. Madame de Tencin assisted with her own hands to dress me, not in a grand costume, but in one more decent than that in which I expected to surprise the Prince. I started, bearing with me the letter from Hugues, secretary to the late La Trémouille, and the ardent prayers which Madame de Tencin raised to Heaven for the success of my enterprise. I reached the door of the little gallery, but, like Hercules, I had to kill or drug the dragon of the Hesperides; this dragon had four gaping faces—the valets, who rushed to meet me with the cries of persons indisposed to allow a passage except to force.

"Monseigneur," they said, "His Highness . . ."

"That is all right!" I answered, passing through them.

"The Prince is asleep," they cried, catching hold of my stock.

"Very well, I will wake him up," I persisted, making an effort to enter.

"Monseigneur, he is not asleep."

"Then why all these difficulties?"

"The door is forbidden to everyone, even to Madame d'Orléans."

"That is what we are going to see."

"But . . ."

"What, rascals, you dare to resist me?"

"The order of His Royal Highness. . . ."

"Do not look at me; I will have you dismissed."

"And if we let you pass we shall be dismissed also."

"Do you not know, fellows, that I have the right to see the Duc d'Orléans at all hours?"

"Yes, Monseigneur; but not when he . . ."

"When he . . ."

"You understand; he has told us that he would sooner receive a couple of kicks than be disturbed."

"Rogues, I wish to go in, and go in I shall; it is for you to choose whether you will be dismissed or will share this purse amongst you; scratch, shout, tear my coat, and you will not prevent me from entering; you will have done your duty and the purse is yours."

Their silence was a reply; I threw them the purse, and marched tranquilly to the door, whilst the intelligent servants grimaced in vain to retain me. My coat was in rags, however, and my cheek grazed, and I darted into the room like a flash of lightning. The step was a bold one; my disgrace might be the price. I perceived at the first glance that I was not expected; the Regent, however, although red with anger, did not disturb himself, as I feared. "Wretch," he cried, "I will have you hanged or impaled! Get out, rogue, villain. . . ." And a cataract of abuse struck me in the face, which was skilfully composed into an expression of surprise.

"Will you speak, blockhead," continued the Prince, impatient to see me beat a retreat, "What has made you bold enough to disobey me? What do you want? Say it, and begone; don't compel me to throw you out."

"One word, Monseigneur."

"Two—three words, since you have got here; but then leave me."

"The Archbishop of Cambrai has just died at Rome, Monseigneur; I desire to succeed him."

"You, an archbishop!"

"Why not?"

"Why? I will tell you, but some other time."

"I must have a promise, Monseigneur."

"A promise; so be it! Be off, then!"

"An oath."

"With pleasure! You are still here."

"Swear to me that I shall be Archbishop of Cambrai."

"Archbishop of H—! Yes, I swear it; be off."

"Adieu, Monseigneur; and thank you."

This promise I had extorted seemed like a dream to the Regent, who got up convinced that I had intended a joke; he spoke to me of it, in a bantering tone.

"Monsieur the Archbishop," said he, "if I had had a sword or a pistol ready to hand, you would have learned that curiosity is not always a profitable trade."

"I thank you, Monseigneur, for the pledge you have given me."

"I—I have given you anything!"

"I should be ungrateful, indeed, to have forgotten it already; the Archbishop of Cambrai is your obliged servant."

"Is this no joke? Is it your intention to insist on the fulfilment of a promise made in the air?"

"In the air—nay, nay, Monseigneur."

"You wish, my poor Dubois, to succeed Fénélon?"

"Afar off—by right of conquest."

"Have not people been already sufficiently amused at your expense? Are you determined to make me the most ridiculous of men?"

"That is not my business, Monseigneur; you have made a promise, and I am certain that you will keep it."

"I do not dispute it; but you will not insist?"

"On the contrary, I shall yield my advantages to no one: and I would not release you from your word for the Regency of France."

"You, executioner—what will people say?"

"You know that better than I; but I have not come to that yet."

"Ask me for anything except an archbishopric."

"Impossible, Monseigneur; I count upon your inviolate word; besides, I have a witness."

"If you insist, I must consent; at anyrate, devise some expedient to relieve me from embarrassment, and see that I am not put to shame."

"I have just got an idea which is as good as another; I will obtain from the King of England an urgent letter in which you

will be prayed to grant me the archbishopric in return for the services I have rendered in the Treaties of the Triple and Quadruple Alliance."

"The devil! 'Twill provoke a laugh if a Protestant Prince asks for a Catholic Archbishopric for an abbé of your kidney."

"Bah! A letter drawn up by me and signed by the King of England will produce an excellent effect."

"Some day you will have a letter written to me by the Emperor of China asking me to make you Pope. . . . I consent, since it must be so, to make you Archbishop; but who will make you a priest?"

I did not trouble to answer, but went to write the draft of the letter to be written to the Regent by good King George. At the same time, I wrote to Destouches, Stairs, Stanhope, and all those in London who were in a position to oil the wheels. Here is the letter of the King of England, or, rather, my own.

"Monsieur and Well-Beloved Cousin,—I am so satisfied with the services rendered to me, as to yourself, by M. l'Abbé Dubois, at the time of the Triple and Quadruple Alliance, that I should like to give him proofs of my satisfaction and of the esteem I have for his character. I have offered him pensions and presents, which he has nobly refused, in spite of the friendship which exists between us. I am informed from Rome that your well-beloved Cardinal de La Trémouille has died, leaving an archbishopric at your disposal. I know not what your intentions are on this matter; but, as I remember how greatly M. l'Abbé Dubois desired an archbishopric, with your permission I give him my royal voice for that of Cambrai, and it is I whom you will oblige by advancing him to this dignity, which he is worthy of filling in every respect."

This epistle was returned to me without any other addition except the signature of George I, King of England, and the great seal of the kingdom. Armed with this letter, I went to the Regent, this time at no improper hour, and claimed the fulfilment of his promise. He saluted me Archbishop of Cambrai, and asked in my ear what I counted on doing with my wife.

"I shall gain my end by dint of gold and cunning."

"Take care you are not accused as I was on the death of the Princes."

"I defy her to boast that she is my wife."

"It is nothing to boast of."

I begged the Prince to keep my nomination secret until I had seen to everything. I had sufficient confidence in Maroy to entrust him with this very delicate commission. I confessed to him that I was married, and gave him the necessary instructions to obtain the entry of my marriage and destroy it; I told him of the church in Bordeaux, in the registers of which he would find it, leaving the method of abstracting it to his imagination. He set off, and returned at the end of a week, during which the rumour of my nomination had got abroad. I was set at complete tranquillity when he related to me that, having presented himself under my name to obtain a copy of the marriage entry, the sacristan had been unable to find the parish registers of more than forty years back, and had innocently admitted that the old registers were used to light the Curé's fires. He searched himself amongst the fragments, but found not a single page which related to the year of my marriage. My anxiety was alleviated, and I was prepared impudently to deny the sacrament, if not the cohabitation. Moreover, I had an idea that they would be more likely to go to Brives-la-Gaillarde to seek for traces of this marriage, which was beginning to be vaguely suspected. I had no doubt that this was my wife's work; but I was not frightened, as the only reliable proofs were no longer in existence. I awaited my better-half with firmness; she did not fail to come and demand her share in the archbishopric.

I was not surprised to see the appearance, not of a spectre rising from the tomb—would it had been—but of the figure of my old wife, with a radiant and jovial visage; she was known to Manet, who scented something of the truth.

"Hold, gossip!" said I, "when the door of my cabinet was safely closed, you have smelt the fumes of the pot and come to see if it is for you that there is cooking?"

"Of course, my dear husband; it is only just that I should profit by your good luck."

"Stop there, baggage! Do you not want to be consecrated an archbishop at the same time?"

"If that meant 20,000 livres a year, I should say yes."

"Listen, strumpet; you will have to choose between silence and the hospital."

"M. l'Abbé, my turn has come to lay down the law; I am your wife, and I will make it known."

"How will you prove it, fool, and who will believe you?"

"Is not the entry of the marriage registered both in Bordeaux and Paris?"

"Go and look."

"In short, I shall agree to no arrangement unless my annuity is doubled and made revertible to my children."

"You have children, wretched woman?"

"I have four, without counting those I have forgotten, and I put them under your protection."

"Do you think I want to be a father? Once was more than enough?"

"What! You will have no pity for these innocent victims?"

"Innocent yourself!"

"I will bring all the four to your consecration."

"Listen, old raven; I will do what you want for the sake of peace; but I swear to you, by my archbishop's mitre, that I will send you to end your days at the Hospital if I hear any talk of you or your sons of a w——"

Up to the present, Pierrette has been faithful to our compact; the sum I have placed in her name dispenses me from her foolish presence, and I believe she is not responsible for all the disagreeable rumours that have circulated as to my marriage. To believe Saint-Simon, for instance, I had married the eleven thousand virgins. These calumnies were difficult to rebut; I took the wise course of being the first to laugh at them. I suppose, if I am ever made Pope, Madame Dubois will return to exact assistance from me; I dine well enough to be able to throw her a few bones.

Once in possession of the Regent's word, given in earnest, I defied all the pigmies who had sought to bar my way to greatness. The laughter was in secret, and I was overwhelmed with congratulations. I had already been consecrated by the hand of Madame de Tencin. My first visit was to Madame, whom I was delighted to irritate with the spectacle of my fortune; she was conversing with Massillon, who, being rendered pharasaical by his virtuous renown, no longer dared to pronounce my name, and had been mighty careful not to speak to Madame of the Archbishop of Cambrai.

"Well, Massillon, have you told Her Highness nothing?" I asked.

"I!" he cried, amazed at my exordium.

"What, pray?" inquired Madame; "I have this morning received the notes on the week; the news in question should be contained in them."

"No, I think not," I replied; "it has not yet been made public."

"Tell me," interrupted Madame, quickly.

"Monseigneur has just appointed me Archbishop of Cambrai."

"You, my priestling!"

"Would you wish me to remain plain Abbé Dubois all my life?"

"I wish nothing."

"Do you think I am unworthy of the office?"

"I do not think at all."

"Do you disapprove of Monseigneur's choice?"

"No."

"I am happy to have your approval."

"Bah!"

"I was supported by the King of Great Britain."

"Ah!"

I did not persist in having the last word in this Molieresque scene, and was on the point of leaving, Massillon having done nothing else but stare at the Palatine portraits, as though he were looking at them for the first time, when the Regent, who had halted at the door before entering, came in with a laugh.

"Do not come near me, Philippe," cried Madame, "or I will throw my ink-pot in your face."

"Am I not sufficiently diabolic already, that you want to blacken me more?"

"I congratulate you, M. de Cambrai; but since when have you been nominated?"

"Since the 1st of January," I answered, "at eight o'clock in the morning; was it not so, Monseigneur?"

"Yet you promised me, Monsieur," resumed Madame, in a gentler tone, "that the Abbé should never get a bishopric or archbishopric in your lifetime, and that you would be a Cardinal yourself sooner than that he should."

"'Tis true, Madame," replied the Prince, with a moved air;

"but I was not in a position to act so, or at least I had good reasons for changing my mind."

"Madame," I went on, "it is the grace of God which has made itself felt within me."

"Would you not have done better, Monsieur," continued Madame, addressing the Prince, "to have given this archbishopric to the poor Abbé de Saint-Albin, who has not been legitimatised?"

"Not much harm done there!" I cried; "that little porpoise will always work out his salvation well enough for the bastard he is."

"Monsieur," said Madame, with a frown, "you could certainly not uphold a thesis in the manner of the Sorbonne; as for his bastardy, it is nobler than yours. It is easy to see, Philippe, that you do not care for that child; yet he is the only one of your bastards who resembles you."

"Almost as much as he does me," I interrupted.

Whereupon I left, enjoying Madame's wrath; but I waited for Massillon, who seemed to have cooled towards me since I had become something more than a Bishop of Clermont in Auvergne.

"Massillon," said I, "you know me better than anyone; it is to you I apply for my certificate of morality."

Massillon seemed as though turned to stone; he answered by a sign of the cross, as though he were defending himself against the wiles of the Tempter.

I walked majestically through the gallery, where the new archbishop was supplying material for all the envy and slander of those present. My entry effected a diversion in my favour, and flatterers came to kiss my claws. Arouet, the serpent of the Palais-Royal, came forward insidiously mouthing out a compliment couched in a sarcasm.

"Monseigneur," he said to me, with genuflexions:

"Les prêtres ne sont pas ce qu'un vain peuple pense." *

"What do you mean by that, Monsieur, you speaker in enigmas?"

"Ah, Monseigneur, my meaning is excellent; one has to be no fool to become an archbishop."

* Priests are not what vain people deem them.

"Nevertheless, you will hardly become one, Monsieur, I suppose."

"No, Monseigneur," he cried, with a sort of enthusiasm, "but I will found a religion."

"What religion, please?"

"The simplest and most natural possible."

"Beware Master Luther! The fires are not so utterly out that they cannot be rekindled!"

The courtiers by whom I was surrounded suddenly interrupted our duel of tongues.

"Monseigneur," said Madame de Tencin, with the voice of a newly-wedded wife, "pray show us the beautiful letter written to you, by His Britannic Majesty."

"Yes, yes," repeated several voices, "your episcopal brevet delivered by a Protestant."

I made a feint of not hearing, and unfolded my letter, which was passed from hand to hand; I spread myself out, deeming myself already equipped in rochet and camail.

"Good God!" said Nocé, with a prolonged burst of laughter. "What is this design traced on the letter?"

"'Tis a fish!" remarked Arouet, maliciously.

"They are speaking arms," added Richelieu.

In fact, there was a fish drawn in pencil just over my name in the address. I have always suspected Nocé of this ill-natured jest, with which his Royal Highness was regaled, when he arrived, smiling at a paper opened in the shape of a letter.

"Guess, gentlemen, what has been written to me," said he, after listening to the story of the fish.

"They write, Monseigneur, to tell you that La Fillon has been made a Canoness," answered Richelieu.

"What a horror!" said Madame de Tencin.

"They send you the birth certificate of the Archbishop of Cambrai," said Nocé.

"No; more likely a certificate of his good conduct."

The outburst of laughter gave me breathing time; I fixed my eyes on the Regent, who made a sign to me not to be afraid.

"Gentlemen," said this good Prince, "unworthy rumours have circulated, tending to show that Dubois is married."

"Married!" cried all the ladies in alarm.

"But I have examined into the source of the calumnies, and

I find no less than six marriages which are said to have been formally contracted; here is an anonymous letter which informs me that poor Dubois is the lawful husband of Mademoiselle Populus, daughter of a chasuble-maker of the Pont de Notre-Dame, who was married a second time to a certain Gochereau of Toulouse."

"Cauchereau of the Opera, no doubt," said Broglie, scratching his ear.

"I am of opinion," said Nocé, "that the chasuble-maker would be quite the thing for an archbishop."

"Gentlemen," resumed the Duc d'Orléans, "I have made inquiries as to Dame Populus and her husband Gochereau; they are known neither in Paris nor Toulouse; it is an infamous lie. They write to me from Orléans that a former wife of the Abbé Dubois, named Mademoiselle Leger, married again to the Sieur Collasse, claims her rights from the Archbishop of Cambrai; it is useless to tell you that this calumny is utterly devoid of proof."

"Monseigneur," I interrupted, "they may have forgotten a tenth lady, whom I will therefore indicate to you."

"Again," resumed the Regent, "there are certificates from curés or abbés, which would prove that Dubois is lawfully married to Mademoiselle Letellier."

"She is a friend of mine," cried Richelieu; "she is everybody's wife; it is her mania."

"To La Fouine," continued His Highness.

"I have seen her," said Nocé; "she is as like the Abbé as if she had been his brother."

"To La Jumeau!" concluded the Prince.

"She is as well known at the Palais-Royal as her green petticoat," replied Broglie.

"Is that all?" I asked, without losing countenance.

"One might find a few others," said the Regent, again turning his gaze on the assembly; "but, as a *dénouement* for you, I reserve this letter written by M. Salentin, Minister of the King of Prussia; read yourself your own fate, Abbé."

I began to think it was no longer question of a jest, and I read in a voice that had little assurance, this dispatch, which bore no name or address: "A woman of very mean extraction, a native of the county of Hainault, reduced to the utmost poverty, has just declared that she is the wife of the Abbé Dubois, and has

had several children by him. As a very little more generosity on the part of that minister would have shut the poor creature's mouth, it is not easy to see what he has done to lose the little judgment he has, even to the degree of not foreseeing the prostitution that this discovery will bring down on him. Moreover, many persons accuse him of habits so infamous that it is doing him too much honour to attribute a taste for women to him. The accident which has befallen him shows us that he is a man ready for anything, and that no sin would embarrass him."

"Is Dubois Blue-Beard then?" cried Nocé.

"I am not surprised," said Law, "that M. l'Abbé needs so much money for his household."

"A moment, gentlemen, that is not all," I said, "another half-dozen women have come to me by the post."

"It is enough," interrupted His Highness with firmness; "can you not see that all these marriages prove that none exists. I will seek for the authors of these subterranean calumnies, these treacherous letters, and I will give them an exemplary punishment. Dubois is Archbishop of Cambrai; respect him in view of his title, if not of his person."

"Droop your head, haughty Sicambre," said I to Richelieu.

"Finally," said the good Prince, "since I have deemed Dubois worthy of the honour which I have done him, to offend him would be an offence against myself."

"Monseigneur," retorted the incorrigible Arouet, "you are weaker than Jesus Christ, who refused to turn stones into bread."

"M. de Voltaire," said I to the author of *Oedipus*, "I will repeat to you the words of the Tempter: 'If you will bow down and worship me, I will give you whatever you want.'"

"I only ask for absolution, Monseigneur."

He bowed to me profoundly, and I gave him a gentle blow, with the formula: *Confirmabo te.* The Regent took me aside, and asked me what I thought of his expedient for silencing the reports as to my marriage. I thanked him from the bottom of my heart, and informed him of the result of Maroy's journey. The tale delighted him, and he commanded me to prepare for the consecration, which would take place as soon as I was ordained priest. "However," he added, "I shall not be able to be present."

"Would you blush at the work of your hands?" I asked.

"No; but I have promised Madame not to go."

"In that case, Monseigneur, you can consecrate whom you will; I shall not lend my countenance to it."

"Good! You are brazen enough for that."

I was going away in a deep gloom, when I met Madame de Parabère and the Duc de Mazarin, who stopped me with the following remarks:

"Is it true, Abbé, that you are going to be baptised?"

"Nay, Monseigneur is going to make his first communion."

"Those are two witticisms, Madame," I answered, "which are likely to be repeated."

"Amen!" said the Duc, abandoning the field to me.

"Madame," I resumed, "are you in a position to render me a small service?"

"A great one, if you wish, my dear Abbé."

"As everything has its price, I will promise you two hundred thousand livres in shares."

"That is better than in words; I accept, without knowing what is required."

"To contrive that His Highness shall be present at my consecration."

"The thing is all the more easy as I shall consecrate my night to it."

"You know then, fair lady, some means of obtaining everything from Philippe."

"By refusing him nothing."

I looked upon my cause as gained, now that it was in the hands of so seductive an advocate.

The Cardinal de Noailles had thought to embarrass me greatly by demanding a certificate of good conduct, and the proof that I was a priest. I hastened to satisfy him, in order to impose silence on the envious and my enemies. The report of my nomination was spreading amongst the public; everyone was commenting on it, and the satirists had already resorted to their pens. I gave a sum of money to Fontenelle, that he might undertake the task of putting a stop to epigrams and couplets. He even had the cunning to extract receipts in which these frogs of Parnassus submitted to be gagged in consideration of one or two hundred livres. A threat of the Bastille

was at the back of this money payment. At the same time I wrote to ask for the Pope's induction, a cardinal's hat, and to inform my creature, the Bishop of Sisteron, that, through my influence, he had been nominated the King's *chargé des affaires* at the Court of Rome. Lafiteau went into mourning over his archbishopric, and, seeing that his fortune was at stake, was not slow in sending me a definite promise of the hat; for which, none the less, I had to wait until the following year. All this time I was the butt of all the jesters, who broke their lances against my archiepiscopal mitre. I never forgave Nocé for having made a comedy out of an epigram.

On the eve of my ordination, La Fillon, who was as free of the public and private entrances of the Palais-Royal as any Princess of the Blood, presented herself in deep mourning at the Regent's audience before my arrival; all the *roués* clustered round her, as though they had not been informed in advance of the part she was to play.

"Ah! ah!" said they, "Monseigneur, La Fillon is doing penance."

"Better late than never," said the Prince.

"Yes, Monseigneur, there is a time for everything," said La Fillon.

"Well! Have you brought us any fresh fruit?"

"Is not my conversion one?"

"Fillon," said Nocé, "you deserve the discipline."

"We will enrol her amongst the Flagellants," said Broglie.

"No, gentlemen," she answered; "I have renounced worldly vanities, and wish to take advantage of His Royal Highness's bounties."

"What bounties?" asked the Regent.

"I beg you, Monseigneur, since you are so generous to people of my profession, to grant me an Abbey."

"It is only right," said all the hare-brained youths; "Dubois has already got a fat bishopric."

"Do you dare to compare yourself with Dubois?" asked the Regent.

"God forbid! Monseigneur!" said La Fillon; "I take it I far surpass him in the management of young ladies."

"We will all give her a certificate of morality and good conduct," said Nocé.

I arrived at this juncture, much preoccupied with the ceremonies of the morrow, and although the laughter redoubled at sight of me, I did not recognise La Fillon in her lugubrious garments.

"Monseigneur," said Richelieu, with a grave air, "here is one of your Eminence's wives."

I advanced, trembling in every limb, and La Fillon turning towards me, I recognised the impudent face of the procuress.

"*Vade retro; Satanas, exorciso te?*" I cried.

"Do you know what La Fillon wants, Abbé?" said the Prince.

"For herself?" quoth I.

"Naturally," retorted Nocé, "the good wife still has pretensions."

"She must be married to the Abbé," remarked Broglie.

"Whatever you do with her, we shall not be cousins," I said angrily.

"Dubois," continued the Regent, "I make you judge in this matter. Fillon is soliciting an abbey."

"Send her back to her convent," I cried; "my crozier, if you please, I will show her the way of salvation."

I showed her at the same time the way to the door; she dropped a profound curtsey, and left more quickly than she had come. "Abbé," cried the Prince, "ask her if she wishes to join the Carmelites as a novice." I was consoled for this farce when I heard officially that the Parabère had kept her promise and that His Highness would be present at the ceremony of my consecration. I fell like a bomb upon my friend Massillon, who having been admonished by the Cardinal de Noailles and a score of aspirants to the episcopacy, was keeping his bed and complaining of the gout in his hands, which prevented him writing what I wished.

"None the less," said I, as a preliminary; "if both your hands had been amputated I would not excuse you from writing my certificate."

"I care too much for truth to conceal from you the fact that I am greatly embarrassed. . . ."

"Why, pray? It seems to me that the Cardinals de Richelieu and Mazarin offer examples and analogies. . . ."

"If you insist on it, I will give you the certificate, but at some other time."

"When I have no further need of it?"

"Then, rather than offend you, compose it to suit yourself, and I will sign it."

"It would be fine, indeed, were the Abbé Dubois to become the unworthy secretary of the eloquent Massillon; besides, I should be afraid of burning too much incense in my own honour."

"What do you want me to say?"

"How do I know? Have you not a stock of fine phrases, a preacher like yourself, a member of the French Academy!"

"If it is absolutely necessary . . . but what sin there may be in it must be put to your account."

"Twice over, if that is all your objection."

"Dear God! What a part I am playing!"

"A fine part—sponsor of such a man as Dubois!"

He raised himself to a sitting position, with the air of an *Iphigenia in Aulis*, took the pen in his trembling hand, wrote, erased, sighed, fair-copied, and eventually handed me a certificate in due form, in which he did homage to the purity of my morals, my charity, my good resolutions, my theological learning.

"My worthy friend!" I cried, "this is devotion; I could not have done it better."

"May Heaven forgive me the sinfulness of it, if there be any."

"You are astonished; you will be much more so when I am made a Cardinal!"

"You!"

"Before the end of the year."

"My dear Dubois, I am beginning to renounce the vanities of this world; I shall go and bury myself in my diocese, and consecrate the remainder of my life to the Good Shepherd's flock."

"As for me, I shall make my residence at Court, and if anyone casts a doubt on the purity of my morals, my charity, my good intentions, my theological learning, I will flourish your certificate."

"Give it back to me, I implore you."

"With pleasure—after my consecration, with two other Episcopal signatures."

"That will reconcile me with my conscience."

"Adieu, my dear *little Lent*, I have to go and be made . . ."

"A priest!"

"My little Bishop of Nantes has received my orders; he will now give me those of the Church."

I left Massillon, and his remorse, to think once more over his sermon *On the smallness of the number of the Elect*, and went to make all my arrangements for being ordained priest. I did not think it so difficult to give an *order*. I was afraid lest the ceremony should be disturbed by La Fillon and the *roués*, if they came to know where it would take place. M. de Tressan even warned me of a plot of the Cardinal de Noailles to prevent me from becoming a light of the Church; there was a question of employing an armed force and of having recourse to secular justice. I had nothing to fear except scandal, and this I was determined to avoid. The good Bishop of Nantes smoothed away all difficulties, and, being convinced that there was no means of repudiating a sacrament, I let myself glide, resolved to pay no heed to the subsequent reproaches of Janus-Noailles.

According to Tressan's instructions, on the 23rd of February I sent for Bastide, successor to Chef, my first major-domo. "A cook such as you," said I, "is aware that tongue is not always a good thing; I beg you only to use yours in moderation. Here are eight hundred livres in this bag; employ them for the necessary expenses. Proceed to the Chapelle des Quinze-Vingts, you will notice a man standing by the holy-water stoup on the left; you will make a sign to him, and he will follow you; you will go to the Carrousel, where you will find a carriage with four horses, containing two persons, who will expect you; you will take your place in it, and only at the barrier will open this packet which will give you instructions as to your destination." The man of the holy-water stoup was M. de Tressan's almoner; the two persons in the carriage, his *valets-de-chambre*, and the sealed packet contained a letter to the Curé of a village the other side of Poissy. Bastide gave evidence of much intelligence in his mission; he handed the letter to the Curé, who, after reading it, bade him return to Poissy and make preparations for a grand supper in the best hostelry. The Bishop of Nantes and I arrived the same evening in a carriage drawn by six horses. As we had a laborious day before us, we supped and went straight to bed. I will confess that I did not sleep that night, and had waking dreams; methought I saw the room full of Cardinals in their robes of State. Early in the morning, M. de Nantes came stealthily to see me; we left by a small door, and, crossing the country-side, reached the village presbytery, where the good Curé

gave us a more glorious reception than if it had been at the French Academy. My nephew, the Canon of Saint-Honoré,* had sent secretly the necessary ornaments that I had requested. It was a tedious task to spend a whole day in religion, in a cold, damp church, and that on an almost empty stomach. My bowels cried for mercy, my nerves were shaken, whilst I received, as it had been a two hundred pound weight, the sub-diaconate, the diaconate, and the priesthood. The Bishop of Nantes had more endurance than I. "A little suffering," said he, "must be put up with for the sake of an archbishopric." My frame of mind was one of such irritation that I looked rather like one possessed than a candidate for ordination; I knocked against a bench as I was saying my first mass, and, in my pain, I flung out an oath which I was quick to cloak in a *Dominus Vobiscum.* The Bishop of Nantes held his sides for laughing. My experience over, I obtained a brevet of priesthood from the peasant-curé, who thanked me, with tears in his eyes, for my gift of ten thousand livres. The knock I had given myself made me limp like a cripple.

"Where do you come from, Monseigneur?" asked Bastide, when I had returned to the inn.

"I have just fractured my leg," I answered, with a grimace.

"How you must have sworn!"

"Not as much as I should have liked, I swear."

I returned the same evening to the Palais-Royal, hugely delighted at being able to say Mass. The rascal, Bastide, made me pay dearly for this pleasure; my eight hundred livres melted in his hands, and more besides.

The Cardinal de Noailles gnashed his teeth when he found I was a priest in spite of him and in my own despite. My certificate gave the last touch to his mental confusion.

"He is not a man—this Abbé Dubois," said he.

"Ask Madame de Tencin," retorted Richelieu.

Meanwhile, I was putting off my consecration, being ashamed that I was not yet a cardinal. Lafiteau was incessantly raising my hopes, and I was compelled to purchase the promise of a hat for

* Earlier in these memoirs, Dubois says that this Canon did not long survive; presumably, he obtained for the latter's brother the succession to this Canonry. It is certain, at anyrate, that a nephew of the Cardinal, a Canon of Saint-Honoré, was one of his heirs.

more than three hundred thousand livres, which the Regent granted to the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, who only aspired to the throne of England for the honour of the Roman Church. This poor fool of a Stuart refuses to believe that he debars himself from his sovereignty for ever by entitling himself King by grace of the Pope; none the less, he did his best to provide a covering for my head, for he was in mighty need of money. Meantime, the hat did not come. I was tempted to throw it to the winds. I wrote frantically to my Jesuit to shower reproaches on him; and, as his reply was not forthcoming, resigned myself to be consecrated merely as an archbishop. It was now the month of June, and people had had ample leisure to accustom themselves to my new figure; the laugh was exhausted, the jests were worn out, and even the suppressed indignation of the clergy appeased as though by enchantment. I fixed a day for my consecration, therefore, and on the 6th of June went to take my oath to the King.

"Dubois," said the Regent, "beware lest I make you keep your vow with the same punctuality that I observed in discharging mine."

"Monseigneur, I consent to anything, except to residence."

"Keep the Palais-Royal then for your diocese, and may the Palais-Royal keep you."

"May God have me in his keeping!" I retorted, with a sneeze.

His Majesty considered me in my new garb; my eyes met his, and I was hardly edified to see him laughing in my face.

"Monsieur," I said to the Abbé de Fleury, "inform His Majesty that there are some bishops whom I should not take for beadles."

"M. Dubois," said the young King, "your perruque is put on awry."

I was done to death with staring during this interview, in which my tortures were exaggerated by the trouble with my urine; I made gestures and grimaces, which gave me the appearance of a devil being sprinkled with holy water.

"Pray, what is the matter with the Abbé?" asked the King; "one would suppose he had an uneasy conscience."

"It is not his conscience, Sire," answered the Duc d'Orléans, without any further explanation.

To obviate the inconveniences of a four hours' ceremony, I had a mechanical, portable urinal made by Truchet, of the Academy of Sciences, who was known as the Père Sebastien.

"Monseigneur," said he, "I am the very man you need; it was I who superintended the fountains at Versailles."

"A moment, please! This is not a question of fountains."

"You can depend upon my skill; I am learned in hydraulics and mechanics."

"Above all, be careful that there be no accident."

"Enough, Monsieur; you will be as satisfied as you were with the fountains at Versailles."

I was distrustful of those fountains, and it was not without a sentiment of alarm that I ventured on his machine, which consisted of a sponge shut up in a tin vessel; I was tempted to believe, after the event, that it was a Jesuitical trick.

The great day arrived; the church of Val-de-Grâce had been magnificently decorated; an amphitheatre had been erected in the nave; tapestry, garlands of flowers, operatic decorations,—nothing had been spared. All my household had been put into new liveries; Maroy, in a satin suit, was one of the masters of ceremonies. As for me, I was so gay, that I sang the psalms and responses; I rehearsed my part under my breath, practised the bestowal of blessings. Madame de Tencin acted as my *valet-de-chambre*, and the good lady was puffed out with pride at the sight of my violet cassock and the rochet of lace and ermine. Whilst my toilette was proceeding, the window was open, and a sempstress at a neighbouring house mistook my benedictions for amorous signals. In becoming an archbishop one does not cease to be a man. Forceville, in dressing my perruque, contrived to cover my face with flour; the rascal did it expressly to try me, but I ran after him, and to bestow kicks on a lackey is not a mortal sin. It was a fine ceremony; I could have wished to be at once actor and spectator. The Duc d'Orléans appeared with his son, the Duc de Chartres, in a tribune in the choir. Madame de Tencin, as richly adorned as any archbishop, was placed opposite me through the gallantry of the Bishop of Nantes. The Cardinal de Rohan officiated pontifically, assisted by M. de Tressan, who displayed his beautiful hands to the ladies, and by Massillon, who was doing penance for his certificate. The church was crowded with prelates,

princes, gentlemen, ladies, and guards. One saw nothing but diamonds, stuffs of gold, and silver brocade. I was not vain enough to believe that it was to do honour to me, that they assisted at my consecration; but to the Regent, on whose protection I depended. I saw many smiles on many faces, but I redoubled my majestic attitude, making my crozier heard, and flashing my ring, made of a single diamond, a present from His Royal Highness. The Prince did not lose one of my movements, which did not lack in clumsiness, in such fashion that I went to the right when I should have gone to the left, and threw the ceremony into confusion, meaning no harm.

All went well until the litanies, when I had to kneel down and remain in front of the altar. The order for this dangerous position had to be repeated twice, for my urinal was not only inconvenient but very clumsily devised. I swore against Père Sebastien under my breath, until my anger found vent at the same time as something else. "D—d Père Sebastien!" I cried, and escaped into the sacristy. This sudden flight caused a commotion which only subsided on my reappearance. The officiating bishops were stupefied at the energetic litany I had uttered, and which even scandalised myself; Massillon believed that, like Balthazar, I had seen a hand writing on the wall in characters of fire. The ceremony proceeded in a decent manner. I was exultant, and sang the *Magnificat* in honour of His Royal Highness *qui exultavit humiles.* That sorry jester, Richelieu, came to me when I was sitting on my pontifical chair: "Abbé," said he, "see what you gain by being an Archbishop; you are no longer Secretary of State."

The traitor glided away, after poisoning my joy. I had all the more cause to believe what he told me, as more than one person had threatened me with residence. A gloom came over my face and I turned towards the Regent tearful eyes, which begged for mercy. I hastened to join the Duc d'Orléans before he left for Saint-Cloud, as had been arranged, in order that I should have the complete disposal of the Palais-Royal.

"Monseigneur!" said I, in piteous tones, "is it true that you refuse my services?"

"Who has told Your Eminence that?"

"Richelieu came and growled the news in my ears; it has made me curse my ecclesiastical ambition."

"To be sure, I might submit to the fact of God sharing you with me; but I am not jealous of my rights."

"So I am to remain your most devoted Secretary of State?"

"Ah! you remind me that I have filled up your place!"

"By my crozier!"

"You see, I only learned this morning what I had done."

"Monseigneur, do not joke like this, or I shall go, in my grief, and hang myself in my Cathedral of Cambrai."

"To speak frankly, Dubois, I am not going, out of sheer gaiety, to deprive myself of an old friend of my childhood."

"You are right, Monseigneur; and if I die before you, as has been predicted, you will regret me more than once."

"The English gazettes do not agree with you."

"I can forgive them, for I occupy Fénélon's place."

The Regent showed me sundry passages in the London gazettes, which announced my retirement from the post of Secretary of State. This was a piece of treachery on the part of the Comte de Sennectère or my enemies in France. My heart was sore at this cowardly attack, and before dinner I had dictated letters to Lavergne which still bewrayed the Secretary of State. This scurvy report from London haunted me all through the meal, and my ill-humour was apparent through my politeness. I was satisfied as archbishop, displeased as a minister, and, had my crozier been in my hands, I could have struck out vigorously with it.

The banquet was superb; the two chief tables had been laid in the Regent's state apartment. The diplomatic corps, the Court, the magistracy, and the prelacy, furnished guests, whose appetites were hearty. Eighty guards, with an officer at their head, as on parade, were the plate-bearers; pages and *valets-de-chambre* attended to the service. Friends and enemies were at the board of the true Amphitryon; Villeroi, Tallard, and Berwick had attached themselves to my bench, the armorial bearings on which were croziers. The Cardinals de Rohan and de Bissy had the places of honour, since it was an ecclesiastical *fête*. Everybody of distinction was invited to the Palais-Royal. The priests, curates, and vicars who had consecrated me, found a well-furnished table at Val-de-Grâce, to regale them after their labours. A gloom was cast over the banquet at the Palais-Royal by my discontented countenance,

which even the agreeable conversation of Fontenelle could not brighten. My idiot of a brother, who had enthroned himself brutally in a place of honour, from time to time flung out silly remarks, the weight of which crushed me. I hope God will take account, with a view to indulgences, of all that I suffered during that eternal dinner. Happily, His Royal Highness had desired to pay all the expenses. It cost more than thirty thousand livres, what with the broken china. Who would be an archbishop after that!

They wished to heap ridicule upon me which I did not accept; they called me the Archbishop of ——well, I dare not say what. Letters, epigrams, fish, gooseberries, a thousand ribaldries of the market came to me. I did not bow my head, and to turn scarlet I waited until I should be a cardinal. In order to defend myself against all this mockery, I prepared, for the month of January of the following year, a batch of bishops and archbishops; this gave rise to a saying that it rained mitres and croziers. I had the opportunity of paying back one of her sarcasms to Madame.

"To whom shall we give the Bishopric of Charenton?" I said.

"Monsieur," she replied, "to the man who made you an Archbishop."

Madame de Tencin is mighty fortunate to have a friend who has an absolution always ready in either hand.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE MISSISSIPPI COMPANY—A PROCLAMATION—ADVENTURE OF M. AND MADAME QUONIAM — OVATION TO LAW — HIS MISTRESSES—LAW'S COACHMAN—*LAPSUS LINGUAE*—BRUTALITY OF THE PRINCE DE CONTI—FALL OF THE SYSTEM—THE BANK ANNULLED — EDICTS AND DECREES — THREATS OF A SAINT BARTHOLOMEW—TROUBLES IN PARIS—THE PEOPLE AT THE PALAIS-ROYAL—LEBLANC'S PRESENCE OF MIND—LAW SAVED—MADAME MISTAKEN FOR LAW—LAW'S PARLIAMENT—HIS RETREAT SIX LEAGUES FROM PARIS—APOPLEXY OF THE REGENT—FLIGHT OF LAW

THE Company of the Occident was prospering, although in the Colony of the Mississippi the one thing lacking was colonists. However, numerous persons were being embarked, who died on the way or only arrived to find themselves without resources. But the journey was long, and the cries of these unfortunates could not reach across the seas to disenchant the Mississippians, as the shareholders, in the number of whom I had the honour of being, without their risks—were called, Law having given me, *pro Deo*, the paper, which everybody else bought for ready money. Meanwhile, as I have said, the fairy tales composed by Lamothe and Fontenelle, and proclaimed in public places by criers, secured innumerable dupes. Here is one of these advertisements which cast gold dust in the eyes of the foolish. Fontenelle, who gave it me, would have me believe that it was written by Lamothe; it seemed to me mighty diverting, especially when I imagined it delivered from the hustings by criers dressed as savages, to the accompaniment of cymbals and drums. There was one at the entrance to the Rue Quincampoix, whom people went to hear out of curiosity; he was both author and reciter, his harangues were more naïve than those of the academicians.

"Inhabitants of Paris, Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, this is what His Majesty, the King of France, Navarre, and the Mississippi, has had the advantage of communicating to me, in

order that I may communicate it to you in my turn. 'Tis neither the plague, nor the itch, nor any other disease; on the contrary, it concerns a cure for the disease of being in want of money. All of ye, noble or base-born (for I do not pretend to favour anyone, and I address myself to married women as much as to the rest; in especial to all honest folk, who have no work, trade, or shelter, but who have their pride), all of you then are invited to make, for your pleasure, the voyage to the Mississippi, and to return richer than princes, with two thousand or a hundred thousand livres a year as you fancy. Be it understood that I have thanked His Majesty in your name, for he is interested in you all, even in babes at the breast. You are not only Frenchmen, you are Mississippians, and in a year and forty days there will be no one but millionaires in His Majesty's dominions, which will be of the utmost advantage to commerce and dealers in paper. Meantime, then, the King of France and I have certain propositions to make you, which you will accept with gratitude. M. Law, who possesses kingdoms in the new world larger than France and richer than Peru, is in need of willing subjects. Let those of every age, of every rank, who are willing to embark on the vessels, be assured they will become dukes, princes, and even emperors, once established in that land of Cocaigne which is called Louisiana, because *louis d' or* grow there like mushrooms. The Mississippi, of which I am charged to do the honours, is the property of M. Law, who, as you know, has riches enough in his coffers to buy the slipper of the Pope. It is a fair province, where wheat grows of itself, where the streets are paved with pure gold, where the buttons of your coats are diamonds, where the poor have palaces and four servants at least, where bread only costs two sous the pound, and elephants are used instead of horses, where men live to be a hundred years, ladies and gentlemen, and where each year of them is worth more than two, than three, than twenty of ours. Brandy is given there for nothing; for wine, no one can object to it; I hear it from your rogues of Surêne, for they drink wine there which has not its fellow. In this delicious country, where the larks, so to speak, fall ready roasted in your mouths, all the inhabitants are young, noble, and rich. You have heard of the gold mines of South America, but they are nothing besides these of the Mississippi; everyone is free to exploit them. You may go out into the fields in the morning, past the barrier,

dig down to a depth of two feet, and there is gold enough to fill your hat. Is it silver you want? you dig a hole in another place; is it precious stones? you have but to pick up the pebbles by the river-side. We have upon our list twenty dukes and peers, and fifty ambassadors of Spain who have offered us their services and their persons. We are equally at the orders of the public, and we will admit into this earthly paradise generally, all persons who desire to make their fortunes. It is enough for you to inscribe yourselves and set off in the government carriage. There are already five hundred million citizens, artisans, soldiers, and great signiors who have engaged their places; that tells you that not many are left. Hasten, therefore, to take them. I promise, during the voyage, to each Mississippian a ration of bread and meat, and as much wine and brandy as he wishes; only those who are sick will drink water. Moreover, anyone who is not satisfied at sea will be immediately sent back to France, there to repent him at his leisure. I have forgotten to tell you that all the native women are beautiful; nevertheless, to create competition, we also undertake to transport, safe and sound, any ladies who want a carriage and lackeys. These ladies will be warmed, nourished, and amused at the government expense."

These emphatic absurdities dazzled the mob, and there was a rush to be inscribed. In this matter the good city of Paris, which was crammed with public wenches of no education, thieves and vagabonds, was purged. But as those who were enrolled were shut up until their departure for a sea-port, a great number regretted the liberty they had sacrificed to specious lies. Vessels loaded with men, women, and merchandise were dispatched to Louisiana; but when all the scum of the town and the suburbs had been voluntarily transported, there was no one left to send, and the criers, who were paid so much a head for colonists, remedied the famine by intolerable acts of violence. There were many abductions, which had the appearance of being permitted by the ministry, and which could not be quite put down. I know of merchants who lost their wives and daughters; of others, who sold them as so much cattle; I myself seized this opportunity of sending to the Mississippi certain rogues, both male and female, who did nothing but ill: better far away than at home. I could have devoutly wished that my beloved wife would adopt this course, but she refused every offer I made her, in order to be

rid of her once for all; I went so far as to propose to her a sum capable of buying the most incorruptible conscience. She answered me, with reason, that at such a distance, the pension I made her might be interrupted by some accident. Finally, she took root in Paris, hard by the Palais-Royal, for fear I should fly away. I was no more fortunate with a baggage who had played me a trick of her trade, and who deserved to be whipped; but, just as she was on the point of starting to the devil or the Mississippi, that other devil d'Argenson saw her, found her attractive, and had her treated in order that he might love her in safety. It was a scurvy action on his part, but his only reward was that it cut a few years off his life.

At this period,* the adventure of Quoniam, the cook-shop-keeper, made more noise than the spits of all the roasters together would have made, turning in music round the fire. Quoniam had a wife, whose ways were so caressing that the whole host of gallants came to "roast" their love in her shop. I think it was Richelieu who discovered her behind a rampart of roasts. Two words from Richelieu went straight to the mark; he sent openly to this fair one a score of young sparks, who did but become moderately enamoured. The husband saw nothing but his fowls, heard nothing but the sound of his spits. One night, however, the perfidious "roastress," seeing her husband asleep by the fireside, let a satin-coated gallant into her room. At the noise that was made inside, the husband thinking that Madame Quoniam had gone to bed, shut his door to go and do likewise, then entered quite maritally into his domestic sanctuary, where he did not think to find a Trojan appearing quite at his ease. The first idea of poor Quoniam was to run to the window, crying out "thieves," "murder," although no one was being murdered: far from it. The Mississippi scouts were passing at the time; they decided that the capture of the delinquent would be rendering him and the judges a service. They surrounded the house, in such a way that the courtier saw no possible way of flight.

"Do as I do," said the cook-shop-keeper's wife, "call 'thieves.'"

The cries were redoubled, but did not impose silence on the husband who, going to open the door to these men, whom he believed to be the watch, was the first to be arrested. His wife

* Probably 1718.

ran down in her shift; the gallant followed her in the same breezy attire.

"Gentlemen," she said, pointing to her lover, "I thank you for the timely succour you bring us; a moment later and this villain," she went on, designating her husband, "would, perhaps, have killed us. Look at the great knife hanging from his belt."

"What, Madame Quoniam . . ." said the astonished tradesman, clasping his hands.

"Do not let him go, gentlemen," repeated this worthy wife, "I dare not suspect this night-bird of any other intentions; if you had not arrived so seasonably, my husband would have put him on the fire."

Indeed, the gallant had, at random, seized hold of a basting ladle. M. Quoniam was so confused at this scene that he stood stock still with gaping mouth. They dragged him out of his stupor to convey him to the house of detention, where the Mississippi colonists were confined. He could hear, whilst in the hands of the scouts, the peals of laughter with which the good wife hailed his departure; but it was in vain that he entreated these kidnappers; they would not or feigned not to believe him; moreover, they had discovered from certain signs that the pretended husband was a man of mark, and they preferred to keep the real one, who was transported from the Place du Châtelet to the Mississippi. The heroic Madame Quoniam was celebrated in a score of songs, which gave her more vogue than ever. I have related this unimportant episode, because my enemies have attributed the blame of it to me, adding that the kidnappers, incited by my tonsure and gilded words, had consented to the jest, but I have not this poor husband's fate on my conscience. Ravannes, who was not then a Councillor of State, may have made the *coup*; but he did not boast of it, because the Regent said that the author of this wicked action deserved to take the husband's place. Massillon, confessor of the Quoniam, has refused to enlighten me on the point. If it was His Royal Highness himself!

Meanwhile, the System prospered; Law was swollen with pride; he was richer than all France, since he was exchanging against paper all the minted money he could unearth; a million cost him no more than a few strokes of the pen. He had acquired immense possessions, town and country houses; he would have

bought Versailles if he had been allowed. He was greater than the Regent, greater than the King; he was talked of as the eighth or ninth wonder of the world; his valets, his lackeys, his very scullions, held their heads high when they passed a duke and peer. All this luxury and stir, projects and paper, was no more than a soap bubble. I suspect Law of having appreciated the worth of his system better than anybody; since no one will ever know how much specie he sent out of France. I made this reproach to him, and he answered me, laughing, that there was overmuch money in the State, and he would not be satisfied until iron and copper were more valuable than gold.

"Evil genius," said I, "you are the opposite of King Midas, who changed everything he touched into gold."

However, matters bore still so encouraging an appearance, that I had not the courage to push him to extremes, the less so, in that he was giving me shares with an admirable disinterestedness. As I risked nothing, I gambled with good fortune, and in spite of all the edicts, amassed as much coined money as I could. I proved to be more prudent than the ant of the fable.

It was in the Rue Quincampoix that the wheel of the blind goddess Fortune was incessantly turning; it seemed to me that that long, narrow, muddy street must have been chosen expressly to render it more unapproachable. This was the scene of all the vast traffic in shares, whose value rose or fell according to the caprice of the brokers. There were falls and admirable rises, because Law had ever in hand a short decree of the King creating new shares or depreciating the coinage. Ah! if it had only been known then that instead of twelve hundred million shares, Law had put nearly three milliards in circulation! One trembles at the thought, and, assuredly, no other prince than the Duc d'Orléans could have drawn us from the abyss, into which, to tell the truth, he himself had dragged us. There was such a prodigious obstruction in the Rue Quincampoix, that the people who dwelt there, could neither get in nor out of it; many speculators passed the night there in order to be first at the sale of the shares. It was necessary to place French guards on each side of the street to maintain order; but this good intention on the part of the police only succeeded in causing several people to be crushed under the horses' feet. In vain did great nobles, and

even princes and princesses, try to enter this fortunate street in their carriages; they were forced to alight and use their feet like any simple speculator; the Dowager Princesse de Conti ordered her coachman, to no purpose, to drive the wheels over anyone who should not give way to let her pass; her equipage was damaged by the people, and her horses crushed. She was afraid of meeting herself with ill-treatment, and cried out that she was the Princesse de Conti. "If you were the Princess of Mississippi, you should not advance an inch; be off, unless you prefer to wait for your turn."

It is related that a little hunchback earned more than fifty thousand livres, by lending his back, as a sort of writing-desk to those who were taking shares. I am astonished he did not make more; for all those who had been enriched, thought nothing of money,—they were all for paper; in a few months considerable fortunes were made, and it seemed, for a moment, as though there would be left no other *noblesse* save that of the bank. Profits were counted by millions, and the small shopkeeper changed his shop for an Hôtel, his counter for a carriage with armorial bearings.

This was the case of the ungrateful Maroy, whom I had brought up, whom I had formed with loving care, whom I supported and always paid in his quality of courier. He left me, just after I was installed as Archbishop of Cambrai. I had half dismissed him, I admit, but I bore him no malice. The cunning rascal, who had a face and shoulders worthy of a Countess, courted some of my conquests; and I made a pretence of not noticing it, for I am not jealous of every woman; but I suspected this menial, I know not why, of envying me Madame de Tencin. He was always trying to divert my suspicions to the Regent, or again, to Law, who, said he, knew what value to attach to the fidelity of my mistress; this was only a snare to conceal the truth from me. Tencin, yielding to my pressing solicitations, confessed to me that Maroy had attempted her, and advised me to get rid of him. I wished to surprise the traitor in the act, and make him unfit for service, in whatever sense you understand the word; but two days after my consecration, at which I had no cause to complain of him, he arrived in an equipage which caused a great stir at the Palais-Royal; he was so splendidly attired, that I should not have known him, if he had not addressed me in deliberate tones.

"Monseigneur," said he, "I am a better courier than you think; I have run after Fortune and caught her."

"Rascal," I said, "pray, is not the fortune you speak of some good woman who has paid you more than you are worth?"

"Understand it as you like, Monseigneur; but I have played in the bank; I have won some hundred thousand livres, and, as I am not ambitious, I have deserted your livery, and am going to live from henceforth on my revenues."

"Be off with you, coxcomb that you are, and, above all, be careful not to come sniffing too near my soup, or you will get some sharp raps with the spoon."

We separated on friendly terms, and Maroy—become M. de Maroy—cuts a certain figure amongst beauties past their prime. Venomous tongues have sought to make me believe that my courier's Fortune was none other than Madame de Tencin; but I repelled these calumnies, which no doubt spring from some discarded suitor. Moreover, I have often held up Maroy's example to Manet and Forceville, saying: "You sluggards, you have two hands and ten fingers, but you will never make your fortune."

"By the Mardick canal!" answered Manet, "that pretty fellow, Maroy, has more than his ten fingers to help him on in the world."

The System had turned all heads of the young Court; the elder Court disgorged with groaning to see all its money transformed into curl-papers. The Regent, recking nought, had made Law his treasurer, and he was satisfied, so long as he had Pactolus to draw from. All his worthless mistresses had bird-lime on their fingers. Amongst the heaviest gamblers the Prince de Conti must be mentioned, the hero of the Rue Quincampoix, as witness this epigram composed after his return from Spain:

"Prince, dites nous vos exploits:
Que faites-vous pour votre gloire?
—Taisez vous, sots, lisez l'histoire
De la Rue Quincampoix." *

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* Prince, your exploits we would know:
What do you do for your glory?
—Peace, fools, and read the story
Of the Rue Quincampoix.

In truth, after having been through a campaign, he returned with dysentery for all his laurels, and hastened to signal his valour in the field of speculation. His cousin, the Duc de Bourbon, was also one of the faithful of the Rue Quincampoix, and, Prince of the Blood though he was, he did not disdain to employ miserable ruses in order to obtain a few millions. 'Tis true that Madame de Prie did not let them lie idle. Madame would have greatly liked to play; I even think she had a player in her name. Her son, who had more hands than two, when giving was in question, commenced by increasing her pension by a hundred thousand livres; he then made her a present of two millions in shares, saying: "Here is something, Madame, to pay for the paper you use for your correspondence." Madame played them and lost them, but pretended she had distributed them amongst her household, so that people were asking one another if they had seen the colour of this money. D'Antin speculated fiercely up to the end of the System; he had attached himself to Law, whose greatness was intensified by rubbing up against great nobles. The latter then had for mistress Madame the Dowager-Duchess, who wore down her teeth rather than the wealth of the Controller-General, at which the honest woman nibbled night and day. Lassay, who was the lover in fashion, obtained so many millions that they rendered him ridiculous. I believe that the Dowager, in recognition of his good and loyal services, kept him previously informed of the fluctuations of the shares, which she obtained in her private interviews with Law.

Law, like the grand Signior he was, did not compromise himself with the Princes of the Blood and the speculators, in the tumult of the Rue Quincampoix.

"Fie!" he would say, "if they were to see me appear at the Bank, they would think I was going to take shares for myself; I should look like a *parvenu*."

However, he wished to know how things were passing in the Rue Quincampoix, and his court racked its brains to find some means of saving him from the crush. All were unanimous in declaring that to so great a man incognito was impossible. At last, they advised him, if he desired to be carried in triumph, to leave his carriage at the entrance to the street, and proceed to the Bank on foot. If this had been done, the extravagance of the Mississippians would have known no bounds. A person of the

society, who owned a house in the adjoining street, from the windows of which one had a view of the whole of the Rue Quincampoix, hastened to offer it to *Prince Papirius, surnamed Pile o' Money*, as he had been designated in a pamphlet. This was the only visit Law paid to the Bank. He was accompanied by his titled adorers. The Dowager-Duchess, who was loved by Law, because he could say: "My mistress is a daughter of Louis XIV," was more dazzling than the shrine of Sainte-Geneviève. D'Antin marched in front, with a thousand attentions and gallant utterances, which won him the most gracious smiles. The proprietor of the house had decorated it with paintings, devices, and flowers. All contingencies had been foreseen, for if a triple file of guards had not been commanded to await the carriage, the people would have crushed him to prove their respect and gratitude. Law had hardly appeared at the window with his gentlemen, before he was recognised by the speculators of the Rue Quincampoix. At once there was no more thought in the street of the Bank, every eye as well as every voice was directed to the side on which Law was to be seen in person. It was one universal, repeated cry of, "Long live M. Law, benefactor and saviour of France." The people crowded up to the window, and Law, noticing there were some poor people shouting louder than the millionaires, threw handfuls of gold into the street, which completed the confusion, and caused a bloody affray. Law laughed at the sight of a battle over a few louis. When he returned to his carriage, an old woman succeeded in pushing through the soldiers and, falling on her knees, kissed the lap of his coat.

"Come, mother," said Law, with a smile, "don't tear my coat to make relics"; and he snatched a diamond from the dress of his dowager and put it in the old woman's hands.

It was an infinite honour to be admitted to Law's presence, and I knew many great ladies who would have done anything for a moment's speech with him. He had more than twenty coats torn, so many were the hands thrust forward to stay him! Madame de Bouchu, to mention one amongst a thousand, was never tired of gazing upon Law's Scotch features. One day, when he was passing through the courtyard of the Palais-Royal, she ordered her lackeys to carry her in their arms, so that she might at least see his hat. On another occasion, knowing that

Law would dine with Madame de Simiane, whose lover he was, she went and implored that lady, whom she knew, to invite her to dinner.

"To-morrow, if you like," answered the latter; "to-day M. Law is dining with me, and I should displease him were I to receive some person he did not expect."

"Very well, my dear," she said, "allow me to put on the clothes of some lackey or kitchen scullion."

"Can you think of it, Madame? You would turn both of us into a laughing-stock."

"No matter! Madame, your excuse is uncivil, and I shall remember it to my dying day; but you may do what you like, you will not have M. Law to yourself."

Madame de Bouchu withdrew with a sore heart. At the dinner hour, she drove in her carriage past Madame de Simiane's house, and, at her orders, her lackeys and coachman started a cry of "Fire!" Everybody came out, or rushed to the windows. Law, who feared for his skin, ran to the door; but seeing Madame de Bouchu leap from her carriage and extend her arms to him, he suspected the ruse, returned precipitately and closed the door behind him. Madame de Bouchu was singularly set upon seeing Law; I know not if this was due to her admiration or to interested motives. She was reduced to the device of having a carriage accident in front of Law's Hôtel, when he happened to be at the window; she said to her coachman: "Upset it, rascal, upset it!" When the "rascal" had obeyed, at the risk of broken bones, she gave vent to such piercing shrieks, that Law ran to the assistance of the fair lady, who pretended to be wounded, but, none the less, ran lightly up the staircase to the banker's apartment. She was, indeed, wounded both in heart and purse; at last she obtained what she wanted from Law.

Law was so incessantly besieged, that he was absolutely forced to attend to certain calls of nature in presence of ladies, who softly purred to him: "Don't stand on ceremony, M. Law; do it all for the love of us." These ladies were, for the most part, duchesses who were deserting the Court. When Mademoiselle de Valois had to set off for Modena, search was made for some great lady to be her escort; but the Regent saw nobody to whom he could confide his daughter. "You must have a duchess," I said to him; "send to Law, they are all assembled there." A

cit's wife, by dint of influence, was granted an audience by Law. The first thing she saw was the Duchesse de Gèvres, kissing the hand which had built up the Bank. "I shall go," she said, as Rabelais once said to the Pope, "for if duchesses kiss his hand, I have no idea where I may be forced to kiss him." Even his son was an object of idolatry. The little urchin was already as proud as his father and mother; he treated ladies as his slaves, and the honour of his birth was loudly sounded by them. They vied with one another in "my lording" this sprig of Scotland. He was to have danced in the King's ballet, in the comedy of *L'Inconnu*, but he fell sick of the small-pox. In short, I believe the most virtuous women would have refused nothing to Law; I except only Madame de Tencin.

In spite of my sinister forebodings, there were some astounding fortunes made. I am aware that Fontenelle was the author of the adventure of the lackey who, having bought a carriage out of his profits from the Bank, mounted behind it, as though he would not get out of practice. But Law related to me the story of his coachman, which is no less marvellous; this worthy fellow, having won considerable sums, asked to be allowed to retire.

"Are you so rich then?" asked Law. "But if you will stay in my service, I will quadruple your wages."

"I will give you my answer in the morning, for to-day I am staking my all."

"So be it! But, in any case, I beg you to choose your substitute."

On the morrow, the coachman arrived, dressed like some great noble; he was followed by two coachmen in livery.

"Monseigneur," he said to Law, "here are two servants whom I present to you as conductors of your carriage."

"But I only require one."

"Of course; the other I shall engage myself."

This coachman, in the fifth or sixth generation, will receive letters of nobility from some genealogist, and his descendants will be as highly esteemed as those of Madame de Schomberg's groom.

My *valet-de-chambre*, Manet, seeing a lady, magnificently attired and blazing with diamonds, step out of a carriage, shook his head, and said: "There goes a princess who has tumbled into that carriage out of her garret window." I repeated this

witticism so often, that I have won as much reputation for it, as though it had come from Fontenelle. Madame Bezon much diverted me with the story of her cook. She was at the Opera with her daughter, when a big vinous-hued woman, covered with gold and silver, entered a box. At the strident trooper's voice of the woman, Mademoiselle Bezon looked round, and said, with an exclamation of surprise:

"Why! It is Marie, our cook."

"Hold your tongue, daughter," said the mother, "would you get us insulted?"

The spectators in the amphitheatre had overheard this colloquy, and began to whisper round her: "Marie, the cook!" The jests followed fast, and to put an end to them the bejewelled lady rose with an air of great deliberation, and addressing Madame Bezon: "I do not deny," said she, "that I was a cook, and skilled in my profession; now I am a millionaire; I have made money in the Rue Quincampoix, and I like to spend it; I buy fine dresses and I pay for them; you could not say as much, Madame Bezon! you still owe me the balance of my wages." Madame Bezon was so confused at this harangue that she left the theatre, whilst the cook minced and strutted before the eyes of the audience. This is the same cook who came to Law, and, meaning to say to him, "Make me a concession," said, "Make me a *conception*."

"You ask me for the impossible," answered Law; "I have been doing nothing else since I came to Paris; but now, I have not the means."

I had foreseen that it would not be long before the edifice of the Bank tottered to the ground. D'Argenson, whom Law had offended, by refusing shares to his lady-superior, was secretly undermining the System in the opinion of the Regent and the public. This devil of a d'Argenson was implacable when hatred actuated him; he finally won over the Prince de Conti to his side; he had lost a million in consequence of some deception of Law's. The latter avenged himself for an insult offered to his English wife. The Prince de Conti, who has fits of mad brutality, one night, at the Opera Ball, caught hold of a masked woman, whom he ruthlessly ill-treated, tearing at her eyes, pinching her arms, and giving her cuffs and blows. The poor victim submitted, until Law passed by and interrupted the Prince's uproarious laughter, by delivering the woman out of his hands.

"Wretch," said Law, "you deserve to have your nose and ears cut off."

"Do you know who I am?" asked the Prince.

"No," answered Law; "your ignoble conduct has made me forget."

"You are bound to respect me."

"I will respect you, when you are made Regent."

It soon transpired that the mask, who had been victimised, was Madame Law. Everyone, even the Regent, approved of the banker's vigorous resistance. The latter, however, went through a form of reconciliation with the Prince, who is the sort of man to bear malice until the day of judgment. To which is due, no doubt, the fall of the System.

During the period of the Mississippi madness, Law turned Catholic to humour the young King. His Majesty said to him: "M. Law, it would be a great satisfaction to me to see you confess and communicate." Law made no answer. His Majesty returned to the charge, and said to the little Law: "If your father would change his religion, I would create him duke and peer." The child repeated this promise to the ambitious Law. D'Argenson shrieked from the house-tops that it was shameful for a Controller-General to be a Protestant, as though the management of the State finances was such an eminently Catholic operation.

Madame de Tencin said to me one day: "M. Law consents to abjure."

"And why, pray?"

"Because he is converted."

"Who has worked this miracle?"

"I. . . . No, my brother, the Abbé."

"The conversion will bring him in, besides indulgences, priestly dues in coin or paper."

I was not mistaken; the Abbé de Tencin had received the price of his exhortations in bank-notes and shares. Madame Law, who had a spiteful suspicion that Madame de Tencin had more share than the Abbé in the work of abjuration, would have no part in it; she cast stones at her husband, and was very nearly going back to England. I advised the Regent to storm the offended wife's virtue. I do not know whether he came out of this with honour. The abjuration was to have taken place in

Paris, with solemn pomp; but it became known that it was intended to trouble the ceremony with masquerades and mockery. It was important that a serious character should be given to this act of policy; the abjuration took place at Melun, therefore, and Law submitted to receive baptism with a good grace.

"Now that you belong to our Communion," said Madame de Tencin to him, "you can be saved. . . ."

"What is the good of saving myself!" he interrupted; "I am satisfied with having saved France."

His Majesty was enchanted with this conversion, which he piously ascribed to the grace of God. But a brevet of Catholicism could not stay the downfall of the System. The Maréchal de Villars, in disgust at the losses he had sustained, was the first to maintain that this miscreant had issued more than eight milliards in paper. A week before the catastrophe, Law bought an estate from the Président Novion at a price of five hundred thousand livres, which the financier paid in cash, with these superb words: "I thank you for having disembarrassed me of this inconvenient metal." On the following day, the Président's son contested this sale, and returned him the amount in paper, which Law was forced to accept. Nothing, however, transpired as to the state of affairs, and few speculators were aware of the enormous sums which had left the kingdom. The Regent, who watched the flow of Pactolus through his house, let himself be dazzled. On the day before the edict of reduction, he asked the astute Cardinal de Noailles roundly what he thought of the System.

"It is an enchantment," answered the worthy Archbishop, who was equally of the opinion of everyone else.

"The devil! An enchantment!" cried His Highness. "Do not exorcise it with a sign of the cross."

It is believed that the Prince de Conti, and, perhaps a few others, got wind, through the channel of the Dowager-Duchess, of what was mooting, although Law's brow had never been more unclouded. At an early hour of the morning, he drew out of the Bank, in exchange for his paper, four or five waggon loads of money, which created a fearful void in the coffers. A Dutchman named Varnesobre sent at the same time to cash bills to the amount of thirty millions. This was bound to accelerate the discomfiture. Next appeared the edict diminishing the value

of the shares by one half. It came as a thunderbolt to speculation. It was Law's turn to suffer depreciation. Cries of indignation arose on all sides, and the proclamation which restored gold and silver specie to circulation enlightened the blind. The most profound poverty, famine, pestilence, every possible disaster, threatened or fell upon France. Law, however, did not lose countenance. The Regent, who had gorged him with privileges, those of the former company of the Indies, of the coining of money, the farming of tobacco, seemed to awake from a slumber which had lasted far too long. Law did not appease the people by resigning his post of Controller-General. They knew he was still at the head of the failing System. He made prodigious efforts of imagination to revive it, but the value of his paper steadily declined. The Rue Quincampoix was deserted; it was nothing but reproaches and despair. The shares were reduced from four to two thousand. An attempt was made to extinguish the bank-notes with fresh liens upon the town. Notes were re-issued which nobody would have, and which had no further currency, in spite of the edicts. No private individual was allowed to have more than five hundred livres in coin in his house; money was re-established; but paper could not recover the confidence which specie had regained. The Parliament, always ready to mount the high horse, refused to register certain declarations. I was not the only one who was delighted to humiliate it. I have described in detail in my political memoirs the loyal and zealous manner in which I served, not Law, but the Regent, the State, and my private enmities. I will not repeat it here. It is my opinion that the Parliament is an evil tree, which can only bring forth evil fruit; it must be cut down and thrown into the fire. The red-robes were exiled, therefore, to Pontoise. Why was it not to the other end of the world? At Pontoise, business languished, then was completely interrupted; for the bar had not thought fit to follow the Parliament into exile; the Parliament consoled itself with *fêtes* and pleasures, high play, and intriguing at every pretext. D'Argenson had done well to listen to the advice of his superior, and deliver up the seals to the Solitary of Frêsnes, who opposed his excellent reputation to the rage of the people. D'Argenson, had he remained Chancellor, would have been stoned in his lifetime, as he was after his death. Bread was so dear, that poor wretches who had

died of hunger were picked up in the streets; bands of the destitute formed ragged cohorts round the carriage of the Princes; the Duc d' Orléans, being importuned by these beggars, threw them a handful of bank-notes, which were scattered like the oracles of the Sybil, but those who picked them up, tore them to pieces with horrible imprecations against Law and the speculators. This was not all; the plague, which was ravaging Marseilles, was making further progress, and at any moment might be expected in Paris.

Meanwhile, at the Palais-Royal, everything gave the lie to this universal wretchedness; the Regent, who held the mob in horror, refrained from nothing which might make him incur further odium. The Prince de Conti, since the carrying off of the waggons loaded with bullion, which had brought about the downfall of the System, was the hero of the market-women; like Monseigneur, son of Louis XIV, he paraded Paris in an open carriage, escorted by cries, cheers, and ignoble faces; he threw money broadcast, and the populace flung itself upon this money as though it had not come from the infamous Bank. This popularity, premeditated and purchased by lavish expense, would have alarmed anyone except the "Debonnaire."

Meanwhile, the edicts multiplied, contradicted, supported each other, and repeated themselves; it was all in vain. The start had been made, and Law's System, according to Madame's energetic expression, was converted into curl-papers. It was in vain that Law spent his gains in fresh baits, no attention was paid to them, and the title of "execrable" was in every mouth in conjunction with his name. There was universal despair, and the ruined shareholders took the side of the humble folk. Civil war was at the gates of Paris; from house to house incendiary missives circulated, which redoubled the apprehension. I received more than one of these warnings, couched in these terms: "Notice is given you that there will be another Saint-Bartholomew, on Saturday or Sunday, if there is no change in the situation; do not go abroad nor let your servants out: God preserve you from fire." The Palais-Royal was infested day and night by a swarm of malcontents. The people's conduct in these circumstances reminded me of the death of the Princes, and assuredly the Duc d' Orléans was in greater peril at this time. Every day Law heard cries beneath his window: "Papirius the Scot to the gallows!" The

Parliament was still in Paris, and I have no doubt but that these cries, proclamations, and circulars, were its work; it had no love for Law, did not conceal it, and had more than once wished to arrest him. M. de Mesme said, in his red robes, that he should like to re-dye his costume in the blood of the Scot. The more grave a character this frenzy assumed, the less appearance there was of attempting a remedy. The mistresses, the ordinary advisers of His Royal Highness, begged him to put himself out of the reach of these madmen, either at Fontainebleau or Versailles. The Regent asked me for my opinion.

"Monseigneur," I said, "in your place I should send for the cannon from the Arsenal, and two hundred musketeers would sweep the streets of this scum of the populace; do you not see that they are in somebody's pay?"

"And, for my part, I neither can nor will pay them in balls and bullets; I will wait to defend myself until they attack me."

"At least have your guards doubled."

What alarmed me even more were the fresh rumours seminated against the King's health. "The Regent," they declared, "has sent him poison in fruits, and even in books, but the Maréchal de Villeroi has frustrated the peril by his caution." It was also said that the Regent had put into the King's hand a pinch of the same snuff which had been the death of the Duchesse de Bourgogne. The more malicious and incredible the stories, the more acceptance they met with everywhere, the more they were repeated; and everyone was singing the *Domine salvum.*

The most alarming outbreak was that of the 17th of June, in consequence of the suppression of the edict of the shares. On the previous day, the crowd was so large in front of Law's Hôtel, that three men had been suffocated. Troops were sent to restore order and protect the banker's life. The death of these three men was attributed to the intervention of the French guards, who had not even drawn their swords. The ringleaders proposed to go in a body and demand justice from the Regent for the three victims. This determination was come to during the night, and towards daybreak, the multitude formed in a profound silence and made its way to the Palais-Royal, the gates of which it forced open. The people precipitated themselves into the courtyards tumultuously; I was still asleep; the noise made by this numerous deputation awoke me with a start; I ran to the

window, and the sight which met my eyes had the same effect on me as some terrible nightmare. One looked out upon a stormy sea of men's and women's heads; there were no arms beyond a few pikes; three naked corpses borne on a sort of litter. The terror in the ante-chambers and apartments was at its height. His Royal Highness, who was informed of the tumult, refused to rise, asserting that he needed sleep, and would not sleep less soundly for it. Moreover, in case of necessity, Leblanc or I were to be roused. I swore all my biggest oaths at such culpable indifference, and, uncertain whether to adopt a bold or prudent course, sent M. de Simiane to warn Leblanc and Madame, who had gone to the Carmelites for her devotions. Leblanc, who knew how to impress people with his firmness and severe air, was not long in coming. His arrival did not even excite a murmur; he was not afraid to trust himself in the thick of this rabble, which might have torn him to pieces; he went right up to the bodies of the men who had been crushed, and ordered them to be removed. This order did not meet with the least resistance. Leblanc harangued the multitude, which maintained its sinister aspect, and for all answer demanded that Law should be hanged. But as some of them complained of famine, Leblanc sent musketeers to pillage a neighbouring baker's, and the cellars of the Palais-Royal. The sight of bread and wine-casks produced a certain lull; there was a rush to secure portions of the banquet so graciously offered by Leblanc. After these occurrences, Law, who had been for some days annoyed in his Hôtel, where he was besieged by a host of enemies, thought he would be in safety at the Palais-Royal, and, as soon as the crowd had dissipated, leaving him free to execute his project, he had his horses harnessed, got into his carriage, and exhorted his coachman to accelerate rather than retard the pace. The carriage was recognised by some passers-by, who shouted: "Law to the gallows! Down with the Rue Quincampoix!" But these hostile intentions were confined to words. The coachman, obeying Law's orders, got so deeply extricated amongst the rioters that he could neither retreat nor advance. A cry of "Death to Law!" which found an echo in every mouth, attracted Leblanc to the scene of an imminent conflict between the banker's lackeys and the mob. "Gentlemen," he cried, in a firm voice, "this carriage is not M. Law's, but the Cardinal de Noailles'; I beg you to let

it pass." This lie in season saved the unhappy banker's life; he lay back, trembling in every limb, in his carriage, which was prudently closed. The coachman whipped on his horses so promptly, that the people, half-convinced, opened a path for it. Leblanc, with admirable courage, walked by the door. At last, Law leapt from his carriage, and, accompanied by his saviour, took refuge in the Palais-Royal. The people were able to discover the trick, as Law, even after his abjuration, had but little resemblance to an archbishop of Paris. Leblanc's perfidy might have proved disastrous to him, if he had not disappeared with Law. The cries and howls were resumed with redoubled fury, and the coachman found himself surrounded by threats and cudgels. The lackeys had slunk off before it came to blows. "'Sdeath!" cried the coachman, "if there is only one brave man amongst you who will try his fists against mine, I will show him that M. Law's men do not attack a single man a hundred strong." This provocation was greeted with hoots, and the brave coachman was hurled from his box, trampled under foot, and stupefied with blows. At the same time, the rage of all was turned upon the innocent carriage, which was broken into a thousand pieces, as though it had been glass. Law looked on at this scene, with the expression of a man who could have wished himself farther.

Madame arrived in her carriage, and she, too, was very nearly mistaken for Law; they were already throwing stones at the doors, and her livery was liberally insulted. Madame, who was in the company of Madame de Chateautiers, thrust her head out, and the sight of a Princess of the Blood stopped acts of violence, and reduced even the most rebellious to a respectful silence.

"My friends," she said, to those who were within earshot of her, "what do you wish? I will beg my son to refuse you nothing."

"We wish Law to be hanged!" howled the multitude, which was reinforced every moment by all the scum of Paris.

"Oh! oh!" they cried, as Madame passed along, "the Regent is a good fellow, but he has bad ministers." It is possible that she invented this compliment, good lady, to see me contort my face. Madame was in terror lest they should burn His Royal Highness in the Palais-Royal, as they had

threatened in anonymous letters. The Regent rose at last, and when his mother said to him:

"Take care, Monsieur; yesterday I received a warning that an infernal machine would be thrown, which would not leave one stone upon another of the building in which you stand."

"Bah!" he cried, with a laugh, "I see they would be mighty pleased to frighten me, but I am no more afraid of the Persian poison with which they would lure me, than of the five hundred bottles of poisoned wine which I am alleged to keep in my cellar."

"Do not jest, Monseigneur," I said, in my turn, "it would only need some bold rascal to put himself at the head of these maniacs, and the Palais-Royal would become a second Troy."

"It is the Parliament which suborns all these conspirators," added Law, as white as a sheet, straining his ears.

"I am astonished," continued Madame, "that there is still so much ill-feeling amongst the people, now that the Maintenon is dead and buried; it is true, those dear du Maines are still with us."

"What pleasure can they find in making those hideous yells?" interrupted the Regent; "I have a good mind to go and ask them what they want myself."

"Do nothing of the kind, Monseigneur," said Leblanc; "the people is a sea which ebbs and flows like the sea; it would be hardly wise to seek to stop it when it is withdrawing of its own accord."

"True," I cried; "the Rue Saint-Honoré is full of retreating forms; these stone walls are much more likely to wear out these *frondeurs* than human faces; they will grow tired of mounting sentinels at your doors, and depart before they are asked."

I had foreseen the result. M. de Chiverny, tutor to the Duc de Chartres, returned from Saint-Cloud in a chair, in ignorance of the siege that the Palais-Royal was undergoing. He asked what was the matter; he was told that all this tumult was only to get Law hanged as high as Haman. None the less, he ordered his bearers to advance in spite of the crowd, and to enter the Palais-Royal, where he had business. One of the bearers accidently jostled some little vagabond who, to avenge himself, shouted out: "Here is Law!" He was believed, improbable as it was that the Scot once in safety in the Palais-

Royal should have again exposed himself to real danger. The chair was surrounded, the bearers beaten, and the cries "To the gallows! To La Grève!" resounded with increased fury. Chiverny himself opened the door, and at the sight of this little wizened old man, more hideous in his own person than a hundred more bulky monstrosities, the people's terrible frenzy was changed into hilarity.

"I thank you, gentlemen, for having taken me for M. Law; but although, hitherto, I could have wished to resemble him in fortune, I now perceive that it is better to remain as I am, poor, old, and ugly."

"By the Host!" said one of the ringleaders, "this is one of the seven wise men of Greece!"

"No, my friends," replied Chiverny; "I am only the Duc de Chartres' tutor."

"In that case," retorted sundry voices, "undertake the father's education as well as the son's."

When they had laughed their fill at the new Æsop, they put him back in his chair, and let him enter the Palace.

This diverting episode relaxed the animosity which had resisted the bread and wine of M. Leblanc. The crowd gradually diminished, then entirely dispersed. Sinister-looking men hung about the courtyards until the evening; but they were so closely watched that they dared not make any attempt during the night. Leblanc organised watches in the Palais-Royal, which was put in a state of siege. The Duc d'Orléans suggested to Law that he should take refuge at Saint-Cloud; but Law, more disturbed by such a perilous day than by the loss of his bank-notes, preferred to remain under the wing of His Royal Highness. On the morrow, a free distribution of bread prevented a renewal of the scenes of the 17th.

The Parliament, which has two hundred hands with which to work evil, and not one to hold the scales of justice, was still recalcitrant, the Areopagus of Greece. It bluntly refused the edict, without a why or wherefore. I took a fair sheet of paper, drew up a fine *lettre-de-cachet*, and took it to the Regent, who signed it without reading it, then to the King and ministers, and the Parliament was transferred to Pontoise, with its sublime first President. If the Regent had had faith in my advice, he would not have recalled My Lord Parliament, especially with

the honours of war, in such wise that these gentry were able to reimburse themselves in money for the value of their notes. The parliamentary effervescence only lasted a few months, and I congratulated myself on having thrown a certain amount of cold water on these big-wigs. But the du Maines and the Prince de Conti had excited the movement amongst the people; it was the tail-end of the Cellamare conspiracy.

A company of the foot-guards was stationed at the entrance to the Palace to prevent the Parliament from assembling, and see to the execution of the *lettre-de-cachet*. This company was relieved by a regiment of musketeers, which, in order to pass the time, took it into its head to *play at Parliament*. They disguised themselves, put on robes and wigs, some as presidents, some as councillors, notaries, and advocates. They pleaded, argued, declaimed, gave judgment, and when the merriment grew more animate as the burlesque proceeded, these gentlemen's lunch arrived—to wit, a pasty and a sausage; this was the signal for the end of the trial; after a deliberation, the pasty was condemned to be broken, and the sausage to the fire until death should ensue.

Law lost his head at this time; it was his only good possession. He still hankered after the chimera of the System, and, like the dog who drops his bone for a shadow, he kept on advancing and then retracing his steps; he fell deeper and deeper into the mire. Bank-notes and shares were as decried as they had once been sought after; the Rue Quincampoix was a murderous alley. It is true that clever people like myself were able to obtain money for their paper, but unluckily there was only money enough for the first comers; the rest had to put up with nothing. An edict was issued allowing foreigners to bring as much property and gold and silver specie into France as should seem good to them; nothing came. No one risked what he had saved from the shipwreck of our finances. The Regent appreciated the descredit into which the Bank had fallen when, being desirous of buying a necklace worth a thousand louis for a casual mistress, he was obliged to give notes for ten thousand, and the jeweller still had the worst of the bargain. Bread grew no cheaper; the plague was imminent; and the people persisted in its desire to see Law hanged.

Chiverny was not the only one who came near paying for

his sins; Boursel, who has the misfortune to resemble Law, as much in face as in his semi-English mode of dressing, when returning in his carriage from the convent of the Grands-Jésuites, was blocked by a hackney-coach which became involved with the wheels of his carriage. Boursel's lackey descended, and found a big blustering coachman who declined to extricate his carriage unless he was paid for the damage. The lackey was just coming to blows with this lout when Boursel, cane in hand, leapt from his carriage and would have separated the combatants; but, immediately the coachman, either from spite or conviction, started shouting at the top of his voice: "Help, help! Law is trying to kill me." The populace soon flocked up, men and women, armed with stones, staves, and brooms. Boursel saw plainly that all explanation would be vain, and escaped into the Church of the Jesuits, with the riotous mob still at his heels; and he would have been slaughtered at the foot of the altar, if the open door of the sacristy had not offered him an escape from certain death. Whilst beadles and sacristans were parleying, he had time to scale three walls, and to hide himself until nightfall under some straw in a stable.

The fury was not appeased by the suppression, first of the large and then of the smaller bank-notes. The ruin of the System was complete. Law skulked in the Palais-Royal; his wife and children remained at Saint-Maur, with the Duc de Bourbon, who made enemies of all the enemies of Law, on account of this hospitality. The Duc d' Orléans, yielding not so much to fear as to the pressing solicitations of his friends, retired for a brief period to the Tuileries; but he was not sufficiently fond of children to accustom himself to the infantile and capricious manners of His Majesty. He returned to his own house, in spite of all that could be said to deter him. Assuredly, Law owed his life to me; for I was the cause, through my nomination to the Archbishopric of Cambrai, my consecration, and the jests to which it gave rise—it was, I say, partly for that that people were less concerned with him, and, consequently, with his hanging, which was the constant aim of all the riots of that tumultuous year. When they began to write songs and epigrams against Law, I was reassured about his safety, for in France we do not seek the death of those we satirise.

The Prince de Conti, by separating himself from Law and the

Regent, had passed over to the enemy, which encouraged him to seek popularity. Madame du Maine continued to hold her *levées* for the purpose of plots, intrigues, and epigrams. The poets of the place, Grécourt, Vergier, Chaulieu, and, perhaps, Fontenelle, composed against Law the "*grande Façon de Barbari*," which made the round of France. I shall not quote it, although Maurepas has given me a more complete copy of it, from the hand of Malézieux, the scribe of the ink-slingers. I, too, let them sing on! but they shall pay me for it.

Law fought against wind and tide, and all the couplets in the world would not have made him budge, for he was meditating a revival of the System, modified by what experience had taught him; but the Regent, who found himself more than seven millions in debt, had cooled down remarkably towards the Bank and the Mississippi. On the other side, d'Argenson, in the seclusion of his convent, still stood between Law and His Royal Highness, who, like the Heavens, needed the shoulders of Atlas. The King, who had never liked the banker, whom his tutor Fleury, and his confessor Fleury, had denounced to him as a Pagan, asked the Regent in a kingly tone what M. Law was still doing in France.

"To tell the truth, he has nothing to do," replied His Highness, "and I will drop him two words on the subject."

The tremblers, a race that has never been more numerous than during the Regency, believed all was lost, because the Parliament was still at Pontoise. The nobility, in unison with the pleaders, sighed for its return, and it was well known that henceforward the presence of Law and the Parliament in the same town would be a symbol of the rope and the gallows. Steps were taken therefore —that is to say, promises were made, to shake d'Aguesseau's prejudices, and by dint of perseverance they were successful, since, on the morrow of his arrival in Paris, d'Argenson had the inscription put up over the door of the Chancellor's Hôtel: *Et homo factus est.* This was somewhat directed against the famous disinterestedness of the Cato of Fresnes.

Law resolved to leave, a poorer man, said he, than when he came to France. 'Tis true he left behind him a fortune in debts, and even his butcher claimed no less a sum than ten thousand livres. "M. Law," I said to him, "now is your season, speculation is doing wonderfully both in England and Holland."

"My Lord Archbishop," he answered, "that is as though I were to say to you, 'there are archbishoprics, not in the Mississippi, but in Egypt. Be off to them.'" There were tears in his eyes, when the Regent very cordially embraced him. "Monseigneur," he said, "the errors I have made are less grave than you may think; but am I not a man and liable to be deceived?"

"And to deceive others," murmured a soft voice, which was not mine.

"To conclude, Monseigneur, I beg you to investigate my conduct; I am satisfied that you will find neither malice nor fraud in it."

Before leaving, Law borrowed a certain amount to keep up the comedy, for he had millions at his disposal outside France, and if he is poor now, as they say, it is because he has gambled and lost. Bank or gambling-hell, it is all one to him, so long as he has a chance of gain.

It was so painful to Law to be at any distance from the Rue Quincampoix, that he went first to an estate which he possessed about six leagues from Paris. His friend, M. le Duc, conveyed his children in his own post-chaise, with the grey liveries of Madame de Prie. But for that precaution, he would have run the risk of being insulted. Madame Law remained in Paris to sell her husband's goods and chattels, in order to satisfy his creditors. But as long as Law was in France, at the gates of Paris, public opinion was not avenged. The Regent, in answer to all the sighs that were uttered to him, contented himself with saying "*mea culpa*." I myself must claim the honour of having entirely routed Law.

Rumours were circulating amongst the populace as to Law's whereabouts, and there was talk of burning at one and the same time the father, the children, and the Duc de Bourbon. As I had discovered this conspiracy, I placed spies and soldiers in disguise round Law's estate, to protect him and, at the same time, to surprise his relations with England, which were becoming more frequent. I had given orders for the seizure of all the papers, letters, and dispatches which left his house; I reserved to myself the right of examining these, before I forwarded them to their destination. They brought me, amongst other letters concerning the Bank, the following strange, serious piece of banter, in which I should not even yet believe, if I did not

possess the original. I read it over three or four times, thinking my eyes deceived me; then I burst out laughing.

I was astonished that this letter, addressed to William Northington, a London banker, whom I knew as an inveterate gambler, should not have been written in English, but, after perusing it, I realised that the writing of it in French was again a piece of bravado. Here it is, just as I received it; I have let no one take a copy of it except my friend Massillon:—

"My Lord,—Have you seen our friend Lord Stairs since he returned to London with three or four millions which I enabled him to win in the Rue Quincampoix? He will have told you what everybody tells of my System, that it resembles the giant's ladder to conquer Heaven. It is strange that the Bank, which has made so many fortunes, has not made my own, at least, not to the extent I had hoped; the Venice bankers have made me lose a heap of money, and I am now going to call in what remains. Would you believe that in France I could not borrow a thousand guineas on my note of hand? I am compelled, therefore, to apply to my debtors, of whom you, my Lord, are one. A gallant man like yourself will not have forgotten that I made a wager with you of a thousand guineas in 1698, that some day I would ruin France with my paper. It was, if my recollection is right, on the occasion of a bill of exchange for a thousand guineas, which I wished to draw upon Bernard, the Jewish banker of Paris; I could only offer you the Exchequer notes, which you refused, saying that paper would only be England's ruin; I shared your opinion on this point; I undertook, however, to make a wager in the above sum that in a few days I would render paper current in France; you, in the presence of Lord Stairs and Lady Colbridge, and of my Lord Cadogan, agreed to my wager on your loyal word, on the grounds, said you, that the French had too much wit to let themselves be caught in such a clumsy snare. I beg you, then, to tell me what you think, and whether I have not well and duly won my bet; I will take for my judges you first and the public voice of all Europe. So, my Lord, counting upon your word, I count upon the thousand guineas, and do not call upon you to add to them, although I have added to the wager. Observe, if you please, what I have done with the sole aid of my genius. I have reduced the King of France to be my

subject, for which alone, England ought to feel grateful to me. I will continue to sing my own praises, for here modesty would be false: I have made the Regent my comrade and my tool; the proudest nobles my clerks; Princesses of the Blood my mistresses; the greatest ladies my w——s; all France my dupe and milch-cow. To conclude, do you know how I shall depart? The premier Prince of the Blood has become my post-master. I shall be in Brussels almost immediately; before I leave for Venice, where my wife will join me, send, if you please, the thousand guineas to Jean Mécuo, the banker, who must now be back in Brussels. I have omitted one detail which will make you laugh; I am, at the present moment, as good a Roman Catholic as anyone who has received baptism, communion, and confirmation. You will think, as I do, that it was not too high a price to pay for the privilege of the Mississippi, tobacco, and the mint. All that I lack are patents of nobility and the title of duke. Is it not diverting thus to flout a nation for four consecutive years? Your affectionate compatriot, JOHN LAW."

This inexplicable letter constituted a genuine crime of high treason; I hesitated about imparting it to the incredulous Regent; Madame de Tencin persuaded me to do so, since, as she said, there was no reason why I should conciliate Law; but she recommended me not to let such an important document out of my possession. I found the Prince exhausted from an interview with M. d'Antin, who proved to him on his fingers, that Law's bank had brought France in more than a hundred millions; unfortunately I was not present at this curious calculation, which had made His Royal Highness yawn. I dismissed d'Antin with my letter, which was a terrible upset to his financial calculations. I wished to read it to the Prince, but he snatched it from my hands with these words: "Cursed college pedant! When will you give up reminding me that I was once under your rod?" I perceived that he was not in his ordinary humour, and resolved to hold my peace, when a boisterous fit of laughter warned me of a sudden change of thought in the Prince, who, instead of finishing the perusal, redoubled his immoderate laughter, until he rolled convulsively on the floor and lost consciousness. I suddenly remembered the death of M. de Saint-Laurent, and was tempted to fly by the door or window; but a moment's

reflection restored my prudence; I shut and double-locked the doors of the closet, and gave the Regent assistance, which he seemed to be past needing. He was breathless, and blood was pouring from his mouth and nose. My hair stood on end. I dared not look around me lest I should see nothing but abysses. A feeble sigh proceeded from his motionless body; I clung once more to life and hope; with tears in my eyes, I gently called upon Philippe, who neither answered nor heeded me. I know not what incongruous idea made me mechanically take Law's letter, and, unconscious myself of what I was doing, I read it in a low voice. I could not persuade myself that this letter, however diverting, was the cause of the sudden attack; but, as it happened, the Prince, struck in the midst of his swoon by the monotonous murmur of my reading, gradually regained his senses, and with them his irresistible desire to laugh. The blood he had lost had relieved him. But for this hæmorrhage, due entirely to chance, he would have been struck down with the apoplexy, with which Chirac had threatened him every day for ten years. I assisted him to a seat, and, by his orders, removed every trace of blood, "because," said he, "if it is discovered that I was taken ill, that ruffian Chirac will want to bleed me, and will be the cause of my humours mingling with my blood."

"I will answer you, as he would, that it is a long time since they have mingled."

"In short, I thank Law for having procured me this wholesome, natural blooding."

"Do you not wish, Monseigneur, to seize his person while it is still in your power?"

"Heaven forbid! I am not so ungrateful as to return evil for good. 'Tis true that he deserves to be broken on the wheel, and his letter would be enough to condemn him, even if justice had no other grievance against him; but, in revenge, he deserves eternal gratitude for having saved my life, though, I confess, unintentionally."

"But, Monseigneur, he has played with the King, the State, with you! . . ."

"I grant it! But his letter is admirable, and I would forgive him everything, if it had been a hundred times worse. In short, I shall beg him to leave France, and that in such a manner that he will understand my warning is mercy."

"Ah! Monseigneur! Clemency is often only weakness."

"Do not let us be generous by halves; let us destroy this paper so that my honour may be safe."

"It seems to me, Monseigneur, that if you are so much indebted to Law, I have a share in the debt, and I beg you to allow me to keep this letter in my own possession."

"On condition that you do not make a bad use of it."

There was a violent banging at the door; I hid the letter, and opened to Master Chirac, who came hobbling in, hat on head, with his gold-headed cane out to try the ground, as though there was a precipice to avoid at every step. The Prince made a gesture to impose silence upon me as to what had passed.

"Ah! ah! what were you doing, shut up like this with M. de Cambrai?" he said.

"We were occupied with affairs of State," replied the Prince, dropping his eyes in order to avoid the physician's.

"Phew! Monseigneur, you are mighty pale, and you were red enough this morning."

"You need not be surprised; your physic was asking me questions which would put a corpse to the blush."

"Ah! ah! apoplexy! apoplexy!"

"I have grown almost used to that alarming malady from always hearing you prophesying it."

"Oh! one bleeding would preserve you for more than six months."

"If I were to believe you, I ought to expect to die suddenly, at table, in my bed—who knows where?"

"Tut! Tut! That would not be at confession! Suppose, however, you were in conference with M. de Cambrai when the apoplexy took you?"

"I understand you," I cried, "but I have still a little absolution at the service of His Highness."

Law did not wait for the express which the Regent sent him, covering in fair phrases what might be too harsh in a definite dismissal. He knew that his letter was in my hands, and although he had a thought of passing it off as a jest, he showed no less haste in reaching Brussels. He sent back the post-chaise to Madame de Prie, with a long letter about his wager, and a diamond worth a hundred thousand livres. Madame de Tencin was much incensed at this preference, for she had shown Law as

much kindness as Madame de Prie. Moreover, he owed thanks to M. le Duc, who furnished him with relays of horses for his hurried journey, and with ten well-armed men for his security. This escort was doubtless of use in keeping off the gentlemen of the road, who would not have missed so fine a prey. Law wrote also to the Regent, to make excuses for his letter to Northington; he was shown that he was unworthy of an answer. Madame Law paid a few debts; but the object of her sojourn of several months in Paris was the recovery of enormous sums which His Highness was too generous to confiscate. The following year I succeeded in sending Law's brother to the Bastille. He had six millions in stock; but his money would have opened the doors of a better guarded prison. At the present time, Law is in Venice with his wife, and does not live like a Prince. I do not believe him to be cured of the passion for play and Systems; but fortune is inconstant with her best beloved favourites.

French Editor's Note

It was my intention to have brought the publication of these memoirs to a close with a hasty summary of events up to the death of Dubois; but the memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu, which form part of the same collection, contain in detail all that I should have only been able to sum up in the most succinct manner possible; it would have been a double task. I should not, moreover, have dared to attempt a competition so much to my disadvantage; and I must refer readers to the charming memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu. It is in those that they will find the last moments of the Regency, that eternal blot upon our history, and the lively, witty, and dramatic narrative of a contemporary will amply replace a few cold, dry, analytical pages. It will be enough to recall here that the death of the Duc d' Orléans occurred only three months after that of Dubois, who was carried off by his urinary trouble on the 10th of August 1723. The epitaph they gave him is a faithful summary of his whole life.

Rome rougit d'avoir rougi
Le m—— qui git ici.

THE END

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